The background of the cover is a photograph of a man in a dark, high-collared garment with a large, white, ruffled collar. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. His hands are visible, one near the top left and the other near the bottom right, both with long, thin fingers. The background behind him is a dark, textured surface, possibly a bookshelf.

# THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

AND OTHER STORIES

OSCAR WILDE

PENGUIN READERS

# ***The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories***

OSCAR WILDE

Level 4

Retold by John Davage

Series Editors: Andy Hopkins and Jocelyn Potter



**Pearson Education Limited**  
Edinburgh Gate, Harlow,  
Essex CM20 2JE, England  
and Associated Companies throughout the world.

ISBN 0 582 42691 X

This edition first published 2000 Third impression 2003

Copyright © Penguin Books Ltd 2000  
Illustrations by Robert Geary  
Cover design by Bender Richardson White

Typeset by Pantek Arts Ltd, Maidstone, Kent  
Sets in 11/14pt Bembo  
Printed in China  
SWTC/03

*All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored  
in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means,  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the  
prior written permission of the Publishers.*

Published by Pearson Education Limited in association with  
Penguin Books Ltd, both companies being subsidiaries of Pearson Pic

For a complete list of the titles available in the Penguin Readers series, please write to your local  
Pearson Education office or to: Penguin Readers Marketing Department,  
Pearson Education, Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, Essex CM20 2JE.

## CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Introduction</i> .....	5
The Canterville Ghost.....	7
Lord Arthur Savile's Crime.....	25
The Sphinx Without a Secret.....	43
ACTIVITIES.....	49
Writing.....	51

## ***Introduction***

*'Well if you're happy to share your house with a ghost, that's all right,' said Lord Canterville. 'But please remember that I warned you.'*

When the American Ambassador, Hiram B. Otis, buys Canterville Chase from Lord Canterville, people try to warn him that he is doing a dangerous thing. Everyone knows that the large old house is haunted by the famous Canterville Ghost — the ghost of Sir Simon de Canterville, who murdered his wife.

But Mr Otis and his family are not worried about sharing their new home with a ghost. It is all quite amusing — even when they clean the mysterious bloodstain from the library floor every day and it appears again the next morning!

The ghost becomes more and more unhappy. It is his duty to haunt the house, but the young Otis boys play terrible tricks on him. What can he do? How can he frighten these awful Americans?

*The Canterville Ghost* is one of three stories in this book. In the second story, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, Lord Arthur meets the rather unpleasant Mr Podgers at one of Lady Windermere's parties, and his whole life changes. He was going to marry Sybil Merton, one of the most beautiful girls in London. But now, before he can marry the lovely Sybil, he has to murder someone!

The third story, *The Sphinx Without a Secret*, is about the secret life of beautiful, mysterious Lady Alroy. She lives in a house in the most expensive part of London, so why does she rent a room in a house in one of the poorer streets? What does she do there? Who does she meet?

The writer of these stories, Oscar Wilde, was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1854. His father was a well-known doctor, and his mother wrote poems.

Wilde went to Trinity College, Dublin, and later studied Latin and Greek at Oxford University. He was a very clever student, but he was also known for his lifestyle. He loved beautiful things, and he filled his rooms with them. He wore unusual clothes and amused people with his clever conversation.

In 1878 he won the Newdigate Prize for his poem, *Ravenna*. He married a rich Irish woman, Constance Lloyd, in 1884, and they had two sons. Wilde wrote *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) for them.

Wilde's first book of poems came out in 1881. He wrote many short stories, but also the famous full-length book *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), which was later made into a film. This is the strange and clever story of a man who does not show his age. He stays young and handsome for many years. At the same time, a picture of the man grows old and ugly. Strange things happen when someone loves beauty and the pleasant things in life too much

By 1895, Wilde was a very successful writer. Crowds of people went to the theatre to see his plays. These included *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance*



(1893) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895). The plays were popular then, and they are still popular today, because Wilde had a great gift for writing clever and amusing conversations. His most famous play is probably *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). It looks at life in an unusual way. Unimportant things are very serious and important things are laughed at.

Wilde spent a lot of his life with the rich and famous people of his time, but suddenly his life changed. He had a very close friend, a man called Alfred Douglas. Douglas's father was not happy about Wilde's interest in his son, and the two men began a terrible fight in the law courts. Wilde lost this fight and went to prison for two years. Life in prison was very difficult, and his health suffered.

When Wilde came out of prison, in 1897, he went to live in France. He used the name 'Sebastian Melmoth'. In France, he wrote a very famous poem called *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, about the pain of prison life.

By this time he was poor, and his health was bad. He died in Paris in 1900.

## The Canterville Ghost

When Hiram B. Otis, the American Ambassador, bought Canterville Chase, people told him that he was doing a very dangerous thing. There was no doubt that the place was haunted, they said. Lord Canterville himself told Mr Otis this when they were discussing the sale.

‘We don’t live in the place ourselves,’ said Lord Canterville. ‘Too many members of my family have seen the ghost. My aunt was dressing for dinner one night when she felt two skeleton’s hands on her shoulders. The experience made her very ill, and she’s never really got better again. After that, none of the younger servants wanted to stay with us, and my wife couldn’t sleep there because of the noises at night.’

‘Lord Canterville,’ answered the Ambassador, ‘I will buy the house, the furniture and the ghost. I come from a modern country where we have everything that money can buy. And if there are ghosts in Europe, I’ll be happy to have one. I’ll send it home to America, and people will pay to see it and to be frightened by it!’

Lord Canterville smiled. ‘I’m afraid there really is a ghost,’ he said. ‘It’s been famous for three centuries — since 1584. It always appears before the death of a member of our family.’

‘Well, the family doctor appears too, I expect, Lord Canterville,’ said the Ambassador. ‘But the doctor is real, unlike the ghost. Believe me, there are no ghosts in any country in the world — not even in very old British families like yours.’

‘Well, if you’re happy to share your house with a ghost, that’s all right,’ said Lord Canterville. ‘But please remember that I warned you.’



A few weeks after this, the sale was completed and the Ambassador and his family went down to Canterville Chase by train.

Mrs Otis, when she was Miss Lucretia R. Tappen of West 53rd Street, had been a well-known New York beauty. She was now a fine-looking middle-aged woman, and in many ways she looked like an English lady. She was an excellent example of the fact that there is very little difference between the English and the Americans today, except, of course, for the language.

Her oldest son, Washington, was a fair-haired, rather good-looking young man. He was famous, even in London, as an excellent dancer. He was very sensible, except about certain flowers and about the important families of Europe.

Miss Virginia E. Otis was a lovely girl of fifteen, with large blue eyes. She was a good sportswoman, and loved to ride horses — and she could ride them faster than a lot of men. She had once raced old Lord Blinton on her horse twice round the park, winning

easily. She looked wonderful that day, and when the young Duke of Cheshire saw her on horseback he immediately asked her to marry him! Sadly for him, his family sent him back to school that same night. He cried all the way there.

After Virginia came the twins. These were two happy little boys who laughed and shouted a lot. They liked to play tricks on people and were often punished for them.

Canterville Chase is seven miles from Ascot, the nearest railway station, so Mr Otis had arranged a carriage. He and his family started their drive very happily. It was a lovely July evening; birds were singing sweetly, and the fields and trees looked beautiful.

At the beginning of the journey, the sun was shining and the sky was blue. But when they reached Canterville Chase, storm clouds suddenly appeared in the sky. Before they reached the house, rain was falling heavily.

An old woman in a black dress was on the steps to greet them. She was Mrs Umney, the woman who looked after the house. Lady Canterville had asked Mrs Otis to continue Mrs Umney's employment as housekeeper at Canterville Chase, and Mrs Otis had agreed.

'Welcome to Canterville Chase,' Mrs Umney said to the Ambassador and his family.

She led them through the large hall into the library. This was a long low room, with a coloured window at one end. Tea was ready for them, so they took off their coats, sat down and began to look round the room. Mrs Umney poured the tea.

Suddenly, Mrs Otis noticed a dark red stain on the floor, near the fireplace.

'Something has made a stain there,' she said to Mrs Umney.

'Yes, madam,' replied the housekeeper in a low voice. 'It's a bloodstain.'

'How nasty!' cried Mrs Otis. 'I don't like bloodstains in a sitting room. It must go.'

The old woman smiled, and answered in the same low, mysterious voice. 'It's the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville,' she said.

'What happened to her?' asked Mrs Otis. She was murdered on that exact spot by her own husband, Sir Simon de Canterville, in 1575,' said Mrs Umney. 'Sir Simon lived for nine years after that, and then disappeared suddenly and very mysteriously. His body was never discovered, but his ghost still haunts the Chase. The bloodstain has always been admired by visitors to the house, and it can't be cleaned. People have tried, but it won't go away.'

'Of course it will!' cried Washington Otis. 'Pinkerton's Wonder Stain Cleaner will clean it in a second.'

And before the frightened housekeeper could stop him, he went down on his knees and began cleaning the floor with a small black stick. In a few minutes the bloodstain had disappeared.

'I knew Pinkerton could do it,' said Washington, and he looked round at his admiring family. But at that moment, lightning lit up the room and a terrible crash of thunder made them all jump up. Mrs Umney fainted.

'What an awful climate!' said the American Ambassador calmly, as he lit a cigarette.



'Awful,' agreed his wife.

'This country is very full of people. I suppose they don't have enough good weather for everybody,' said Mr Otis.

Mrs Umney lay on the floor with her eyes closed. Mrs Otis looked down at her.

'My dear Hiram,' she cried, 'what can we do with a woman who faints?'

'Make her pay,' answered the Ambassador. 'She has to pay if she breaks something, so tell her to pay if she faints. She won't faint after that.'

And in a few moments Mrs Umney sat up. There was no doubt that she was very upset.

'Be careful,' she warned Mr Otis, and her voice was shaking. 'Trouble is coming to this house.'

'Trouble?' said Mr Otis. He smiled.

'I've seen things with my own eyes, sir, that would make your hair stand on end!' Mrs Umney continued. 'For many nights now I haven't closed my eyes in sleep. I've been too afraid.'

But Mr Otis and his wife told the woman not to worry.

'We're not afraid of ghosts,' said the Ambassador.

So the old housekeeper asked God to be kind to her new employers, made arrangements for an increase in her pay, and then went nervously up to her own room.



The storm blew all night, but nothing mysterious happened. But the next morning, when the Otis family came down to breakfast, they found the terrible bloodstain on the library floor again.

'I don't think it can be the fault of Pinkerton's Wonder Stain Cleaner,' said Washington. 'I've used it for everything. It must be the ghost.'

He cleaned away the stain a second time with the little black stick, but the next morning it appeared again.

That night, Mr Otis closed all the windows, locked the library door, and carried the key upstairs. But in the morning the bloodstain was there again.

The whole family was very interested.

'Are there ghosts in the world, or aren't there?' they asked each other. They could not decide.

But that night, all doubts about the ghost left them for ever.

The day had been warm and sunny, and in the cool of the evening the family went out for a drive in the carriage. They did not return home until nine o'clock, when they had a light supper.

Their conversation did not include talk of ghosts or haunted houses, and no word was said about the dead Sir Simon de Canterville. Instead they spoke of happier things —

the theatre, the actress Sarah Bernhardt, railway travel, Boston, New York, and many of the places that they had visited in America.

At eleven o'clock, they went to bed. By half-past eleven, all the lights in the house were out.

Some time later, Mr Otis was woken by a strange noise in the passage outside his room. It was the sound of metal rubbing against metal, and it seemed to come nearer to his bedroom door each minute. He lit a candle and looked at the clock on the small table next to his bed. It was exactly one o'clock.

Mr Otis was quite calm. He put a hand to his face and decided that he did not have a fever. Everything about him was quite normal.

His listened carefully for a few moments — and heard the sound of footsteps. He immediately got out of bed, took a small bottle out of his case, and opened the bedroom door.

He saw a terrible old man facing him in the pale moonlight. The old man's eyes were as red as fire, and he had long grey hair which fell over his shoulders. His clothes were in the style of an earlier century, and they were dirty and full of holes. Heavy, rusty chains hung from his arms and legs.

'My dear sir,' said Mr Otis, 'you really must put some oil on those rusty chains. For that purpose I'm giving you a small bottle of Smith's Rising Sun Oil. According to the makers, you only have to use it once. It's quite famous in America. Everybody uses it, and you will see that there are letters from well-known Americans printed on the bottle.'

Mr Otis put the bottle down on a small table.

'I'll leave it here for you,' he said. 'I'll be happy to give you more if you need it.'

Then the Ambassador went back to his bed.

For a moment, the Canterville Ghost did not move. He was shocked and angry. Then he knocked the bottle of oil violently on to the floor and hurried away down the passage. A strange green light shone out from his body, and he screamed — a deep and terrible cry — into the night.

When he reached the top of the great stairs, a door opened. Two little figures in white appeared out of the darkness, and a large pillow flew past his head! The ghost quickly did the only thing that seemed safe. He disappeared into the wall.

When he reached his secret room in the western part of the house, the ghost sat down in the moonlight and tried to think. He could not believe what had just happened. He had never been so insulted in all his 300 years of excellent and famous haunting!

To make himself feel better, he remembered some of his finest performances.

'There was Lord Canterville's aunt,' he said to himself. 'I put my skeleton hands on her shoulders and almost frightened her to death! That was wonderful! And before that there were the four girl servants. They ran away screaming after they saw me smiling at them through the curtains of the small bedroom! And there was the man-servant. He shot

himself after he saw a green hand knocking at the window. Then there was the beautiful Lady Stutfield. She had to wear a black cloth round her neck to hide the mark of five skeleton fingers burnt into her white skin.'

The Canterville Ghost smiled to himself, but his smile quickly disappeared.

'And now? Now some terrible modern Americans come and offer me Rising Sun Oil, and throw pillows at my head! Well, I'll make them sorry! Oh, yes, I will!'

For the rest of that night, the ghost sat there, thinking deeply.



The next morning, when the Otis family met at breakfast, they discussed the ghost for some time. The Ambassador was a little annoyed that his present had not been accepted.

'I don't wish to harm the ghost in any way,' he said. He looked at his young sons. 'And it is not polite to throw pillows at someone who has been in this house for so long.'

This was a very fair thing to say, but the twins shouted with laughter until Mr Otis looked coldly at them.

The Ambassador continued. 'But if the ghost refuses to use the Rising Sun Oil, we'll have to take his chains away from him. It's quite impossible to sleep with that noise outside the bedrooms every night.'

But for the rest of the week, the house was quiet. The only worrying thing was the bloodstain on the library floor. Each day Washington cleaned the floor with Pinkerton's Wonder Stain Cleaner, and each night Mr Otis locked the doors and windows.



But every morning the bloodstain was back again.

And, even stranger, it changed colour! Some mornings it was a dull red, then it was bright red, then a rich purple, and once a bright green. These changes amused the family, and every evening they tried to guess what colour it would be the next day.

Only little Virginia didn't seem to share the joke. For some reason she was upset at the sight of the bloodstain, and she very nearly cried on the morning when it was bright green.

The second appearance of the ghost was on Sunday night. Not long after they had gone to bed, the family were suddenly frightened by a terrible crash in the hall. Rushing downstairs, they found that a large suit of old armour had fallen from its usual place on to the stone floor. The Canterville Ghost was sitting in a sixteenth-century chair. He was rubbing his knees, with a look of great pain on his face.

The twins had brought their pea-shooters with them and immediately began to shoot dried peas at him, while Mr Otis aimed his gun.

'Hold up your hands!' said the Ambassador.





*The twins had brought their pea-shooters with them . . .*

The ghost jumped up with a wild and angry cry and flew straight through them like the wind. He put out Washington's candle as he passed, and suddenly they were left in complete darkness.

When the ghost reached the top of the stairs, he turned and gave his terrible ghostly laugh. This famous laugh had been very useful on more than one occasion, turning Lord Raker's hair white, and causing three servants to run away in terror.

But before the sound died away, a bedroom door opened and Mrs Otis came out. She was carrying a bottle in her hand.

'I'm afraid you're not well,' she said to the Canterville Ghost. So I've brought you a bottle of Dr Dobell's Medicine. If you have stomach trouble, you will find that it's an excellent cure.'

The ghost stared angrily at her, and immediately began to make preparations to change himself into a large black dog. He was quite famous for this. But the sound of young footsteps coming up the stairs made him change his mind, and he disappeared with the deep cry of a dead man as the twins came near.

When he reached his room, the ghost became really unhappy. The twins' tricks were annoying, of course, but he was especially angry that he had not been able to wear the suit of armour. He hoped that even modern Americans would be excited at the sight of a Ghost in Armour.

It was his own suit. He had worn it with great success at Kenilworth in 1575, and Queen Elizabeth herself had said how handsome he looked. But when he had put it on for the Americans, the weight of the whole suit had been too great for him. He had fallen, hurting both his knees badly.

For some days after this, he was very ill. He only left his room to keep the bloodstain in good condition. But he took great care of himself, and he soon felt better. Then he decided to try, once again, to frighten the American Ambassador and his family.

He chose Friday, 17th August, for his appearance, and spent most of that day planning and preparing. He was going to wear a large hat, he decided, and the white burial sheet. And he would carry a rusty sword.

In the evening there was a violent storm. All the windows and doors in the old house shook noisily, and the rain crashed down on to the roof. It was perfect weather for haunting, and he loved it.

The ghost planned to start in Washington Otis's room. He was especially angry with that young man. He knew that Washington was the one who regularly used Pinkerton's Wonder Stain Cleaner to clean away the bloodstain. He intended to go quietly to Washington's room, make ghost noises at him, then cut his own throat to the sound of low music. This would fill the stupid young man with terror.

Next, he would go to the room of the Ambassador and his wife. There he would place an ice-cold hand on Mrs Otis's face while he whispered the terrible secrets of death into

her husband's ear.

He had not made a decision about little Virginia. She had never insulted him in any way, and she was pretty and gentle. Perhaps a few soft 'Aaaaghs!' from behind the curtains, he thought. Or if that did not wake her, a feverish movement of the blanket with ghostly fingers. He would decide later.

He was certainly going to frighten the twins, there was no doubt about that. Their beds were quite close to each other, so he would stand between them and appear like a green, icy-cold dead body until they were too frightened to move. Then he would throw off the white sheet and move round the room in his famous 'Skeleton's Dance', which had put terror into the hearts of many people.

At half-past ten, he heard the family going to bed. For some time he could hear shouts of laughter from the twins' room. Clearly they were amusing themselves with the light-hearted cheerfulness of schoolboys. But at a quarter past eleven everything was quiet, and at midnight the ghost left his room.

Night birds flew against the windows or screamed from trees. The wind blew round the outside of the house, and there were the usual ghostly midnight sounds, but the Otis family slept peacefully. They did not know about the terrible things that the Canterville Ghost had planned for them.

High above the noise of the rain and the storm, the Canterville Ghost could hear the heavy breathing of the Ambassador.

He stepped out of the wall with a cruel smile on his face, and the moon hid behind a cloud as he went past the great hall window. He moved in silence — a ghostly shadow. The darkness itself seemed to hate him as he passed through it. Once he thought he heard a shout, and he stopped. But it was only a dog from the farm near the house.

At last he reached the corner of the passage that led to the room of the unfortunate Washington. For a moment or two, the Canterville Ghost stopped and listened. The wind blew through his long grey hair. Then the clock sounded a quarter past midnight, and he laughed cruelly and turned the corner.

With a scream of terror, he stepped back and covered his face with his long, bony hands. There, facing him, stood a large ghostly figure with a shining, hairless head!

It was like something from a madman's dream! Silent, ugly laughter held open its great mouth. From inside it, a red light burned like a fire. The body was covered, like the Canterville Ghost's, in a burial sheet. There was a notice on it — a list, no doubt, of terrible things done in the past. The Canterville Ghost did not wait to read it. He had never seen a ghost before. It frightened him!

He gave it another quick look, then turned and ran. He fell over his own white sheet, dropped his rusty sword into one of Hiram B. Otis's shoes (where it was found the next morning), and ran back to his room. There he fell down on to his bed and hid his face under the blanket.



After a time, he began to feel better, and he decided to go and speak to the other ghost when daylight came.

‘With the terrible twins,’ he thought, ‘two ghosts will be better than one!’

So, just as the early morning sun was touching the hills with silver light, he returned towards the place where he had first met the other ghost.

It was still there, but something had happened to it. The light had gone from its eyes, and it was resting against the wall like a sick man. The Canterville Ghost rushed forward and took it in his arms.

You can imagine his shock when the head fell off, and the body fell to pieces! He found himself holding a white curtain.

A sweeping brush and a round, hollow vegetable lay at his feet!

He couldn’t understand it. He quickly took the piece of paper from the curtain and read:

<p>THE OTIS GHOST The only true and real ghost. All others are false.</p>
---

Suddenly the Canterville Ghost understood. He had been tricked!



The next day, the ghost was very weak and tired. The terrible excitement of the last four weeks was beginning to have its effect. For five days he stayed in his room, and at last he decided to stop putting the bloodstain on the library floor. If the Otis family did not want it, they clearly did not deserve it.

Ghostly appearances were a different thing and not under his control. It was his duty to appear in the passages once a week, and to make frightening noises from the great hall window on the first and third Wednesdays of every month. He had to do it. It is true that his life had been very bad, but he had a strong sense of duty in connection with his haunting work.

So, for the next three Saturdays, the Canterville Ghost walked the passages of Canterville Chase between the hours of midnight and three o’clock. He made sure that no-one heard or saw him. He took off his boots, walked as quietly as possible on the old floors of the house, wore a big black coat, and used the Rising Sun Oil on his chains. It is true that he only forced himself to use the oil with great difficulty. But one night, while the family were at dinner, he went into Mr Otis’s bedroom and took the bottle.



*Suddenly the Canterville Ghost understood.  
He had been tricked!*

Although he was very careful, he was not allowed to haunt without interruption. Strings were stretched across the passages, and he fell over them in the dark. And once he had a bad fall after stepping on some butter that the twins had put on the top of the stairs.

This last insult made him very angry, and he decided to visit the boys in his famous appearance as 'Rupert, the Headless Lord'.

He had not appeared as this for seventy years, not since he had frightened the pretty Lady Barbara Modish. It took him three hours to get ready, but at last he was very pleased with his appearance. The big leather riding boots that went with the clothes were just a little too large for him, and he could only find one of the two big guns, but he was quite satisfied. At a quarter past one he began his silent walk down the passage.

When he reached the twins' room, he saw that the door was not completely closed. The ghost pushed it open wide and walked in — and a heavy bucket of water fell from the top of the door, wetting him to the skin, and just missing his left shoulder! At the same time he heard shouts of laughter from the twins.

The great shock made him run back to his room as fast as he could go, and the next day he was ill with a bad cold.



The Canterville Ghost now gave up all hope of ever frightening this rude American family. He moved round the passages wearing soft shoes, but only when he was sure that he would not meet anybody.

The last terrible experience was on 19th September. He went down to the entrance hall. The time was about a quarter past two in the morning, and he felt sure that he would be safe there. He was going towards the library to see if any of the bloodstain was left when suddenly two figures jumped out at him from a dark corner. They waved their arms wildly above their heads, and screamed out 'BOO!' in his ear.

The ghost was very frightened and rushed towards the stairs.

But Washington Otis was waiting for him there with a big bottle of Gardener's Grass Grower, ready to pour over him. With enemies on every side, the ghost had to disappear into the great fireplace to escape. (Fortunately the fire was not lit.) From there, he had to reach his room through the chimneys, and when he arrived back he was terribly dirty and untidy.



After that, nobody saw him again. The twins tried to catch him several times, but the tricks only annoyed their parents and the servants. It was soon clear that the ghost's feelings were very badly hurt and that he would not appear.

Mr Otis began work again, writing his book about American politics. Mrs Otis gave a

number of parties of the American kind, and surprised everybody in that part of the country. The twins played in the house and gardens. And Virginia rode round the roads on her little horse with the young Duke of Cheshire, who had come to spend the last week of the school holidays at Canterville Chase.

Mr Otis wrote a letter to Lord Canterville, telling him that the ghost was gone. Lord Canterville replied, saying that he was happy to hear it.

But the ghost was still in the house. It is true that he felt very ill, but he was not ready to give up. When he heard that the young Duke of Cheshire was in the Chase, he made arrangements. He planned to make his most frightening appearance as the 'Ghost of the Moonlit Murderer'. He remembered how it had frightened old Lady Startup on New Year's Day in 1764. She had screamed and fainted, and had died three days later.

But at the last moment, his terror of the twins stopped the ghost leaving his room, and the little Duke of Cheshire slept in peace and dreamed of Virginia.



A few days after this, Virginia and her young admirer went out riding in the fields. But a tree tore her riding skirt very badly, and when they got home she went up the back stairs to mend it. She was running past the half-open door of one of the rooms when she saw someone inside. It was, she thought, her mother's servant, who sometimes took her needlework there. So she went to the door to ask the girl to mend her skirt.

But to her great surprise, it was the Canterville Ghost himself! He was sitting by the window, watching the first leaves of autumn falling from the trees. His head was on his hand, and he looked terribly unhappy. Little Virginia's first idea was to run away and lock herself in her room, but then she began to feel sorry for him.

He didn't know she was there until she spoke to him.

'I'm so sorry for you,' she said. 'But my brothers are going back to school tomorrow, and then, if you behave yourself, no-one will annoy you.'

The ghost looked round in surprise at the pretty little girl who was daring to speak to him. 'It's silly to ask me to behave myself,' he answered. 'Very silly.'

'Why?' she said.

'Because I have to make noises with my chains, and cry through keyholes, and walk about at night,' said the Canterville Ghost. 'It's my only reason for being alive.'

'That's no reason for being alive, and you know you've been very bad,' said Virginia.

The ghost said nothing.

'Mrs Umney told us, when we arrived here, that you killed your wife,' Virginia continued.

'Well, yes, that's true,' said the ghost, sounding rather annoyed.





*His head was on his hand, and he looked terribly unhappy.*

‘But it was a family matter, and nobody else’s business.’

‘It’s very wrong to kill someone,’ said Virginia.

‘Oh, its easy for people to blame me when they don’t understand!’ replied the Canterville Ghost. ‘My wife was plain — even ugly — and she was a bad housekeeper. She knew nothing about cooking. But it doesn’t matter now; it was a long time ago. But I don’t think it was very nice of her brothers to make me die of hunger, even if I did kill her.’

‘Die of hunger?’ said Virginia. ‘Oh, Mr Ghost — I mean Sir Simon — are you hungry? I have a sandwich in my case. Would you like it?’

‘No, thank you,’ said the ghost. ‘I never eat anything now. But it’s very kind of you. You’re much nicer than the rest of your nasty, rude, dishonest family.’

‘Stop!’ cried Virginia angrily. ‘You’re the one who’s rude and nasty. And if we’re talking about dishonesty, you know you stole the paints out of my box to make that silly bloodstain in the library.’

The ghost was silent.

‘First you took all my red colours, and I couldn’t paint any more pictures of the sun going down in the evenings,’ Virginia continued. ‘Then you took the green and the yellow. In the end I only had dark blue and white, so I could only paint moonlight scenes, which are very difficult. I never told the others about it, although it was very annoying and silly. Who has ever heard of bright green blood?’

‘Well, really,’ said the ghost, rather ashamed, ‘what could I do? It’s very difficult to get real blood these days. And because your brother started the fight with his Wonder Stain Cleaner, it seemed all right to take your paints. What’s wrong with that? You Americans don’t understand anything.’

‘You don’t know anything about Americans or America,’ said Virginia. ‘Why don’t you go there? Father will be happy to pay for your ticket to travel on a ship. There are people in America who would pay a hundred thousand dollars to have a family ghost.’

‘No, thank you,’ said the ghost. ‘I don’t think I’d like America.’

‘Why? Because it doesn’t have any terrible old houses?’ said Virginia. ‘Because everything’s new and modern?’ She was angry now. ‘Excuse me. I’ll go and ask my father to give the twins another week’s holiday!’

‘Please don’t go, Miss Virginia,’ cried the ghost. ‘I’m so lonely and unhappy, and I really don’t know what to do. I want to go to sleep, but I can’t.’

‘That’s silly!’ she said. ‘You just go to bed and blow out the candle. There’s no difficulty about sleeping. Even babies know how to do that, and they aren’t very clever.’

‘I haven’t slept for 300 years,’ the ghost said sadly.

Virginias beautiful blue eyes got bigger and bigger with surprise. ‘Three hundred years!’ she said.

‘Yes,’ said the ghost. ‘And I’m so tired.’

Virginia’s little lips began to shake like the leaves of a flower, and she came towards

him. She looked into his old, tired face.

‘Poor, poor Ghost,’ she said quietly. ‘Isn’t there a place where you can sleep?’

‘Far away beyond the woods,’ he answered in a low dreamy voice, ‘there’s a little garden by an old empty church. There the grass grows long and deep, and there are the white stars of wild flowers. A little bird sings all night, and the cold moon looks down, and the big old tree stretches out its arms over the sleepers.’

Virginia’s eyes filled with tears, and she hid her face in her hands. ‘You — you mean the Garden of Death,’ she whispered.

‘Yes, Death,’ said the ghost. ‘Death must be so beautiful. Lying in the soft brown earth, with the grass waving above your head, and listening to silence. I’d love to have no yesterday, and no tomorrow — to be at peace!’ He looked at her. ‘Have you ever read the old words on the library window?’

‘Oh, often,’ cried the little girl. ‘I know them quite well. They’re painted in old black letters that are hard to read. There are only four lines:

*When a golden girl prays for you,  
When a small child cries, too,  
Then the whole house will be still  
And peace will come to Canterville.*

‘But I don’t know what they mean.’

‘They mean this,’ the Canterville Ghost said sadly. ‘You can cry for me, and for everything that I’ve done wrong, because I have no tears. You can pray with me, because I’m bad and can’t pray. And then, if you’ve always been sweet and good and gentle, Death will be kind to me. You’ll see terrible shapes in the darkness, and ghostly voices will whisper in your ear, but they won’t harm you. They can’t win the fight against the innocence and goodness of a child.’

Virginia did not answer, and the ghost looked down unhappily at her golden head.

Suddenly she stood up, very pale, and with a strange light in her eyes.

‘I’m not afraid,’ she said clearly. ‘I’ll pray for you to die, and for you to have peace.’

He stood up with a faint cry of happiness. Taking her hand, he bent over it and kissed it. His fingers were as cold as ice and his lips burned like fire, but Virginia went with him as he led her across the room.

At the end of the room, he stopped. He said some words that she could not understand. She saw the wall slowly open, and there was a great black hole in front of her. A bitter cold wind pulled at them, and in a moment the wall had closed behind them and the room was empty.



About ten minutes later, the bell rang for tea, but Virginia did not come down from her



room. Mrs Otis sent a servant to fetch her, but after a little time he came back.

'I can't find Miss Virginia anywhere,' he said.

At first, Mrs Otis did not worry. She knew that Virginia liked to go out into the garden in the evenings to get flowers for the dinner-table. But at six o'clock she sent the twins out to look for their sister while she and Mr Otis searched every room in the house.

At half-past six the boys came back.

'We can't find Virginia anywhere,' they said.

Everyone was now very anxious. They searched the house again, and then the gardens and the park. Next they searched the woods and fields round Canterville Chase, but they still could not find Virginia.

Mr Otis, Washington and two male servants went into the village.

'Have you seen Virginia?' they asked people.

But nobody could help.

When it was almost midnight, they went back to the house. They were very worried, but they could do nothing more until the morning.

Everyone was in the hall when the clock sounded midnight. Suddenly they heard a loud noise, followed by a terrible cry. A crash of thunder shook the house, and the sound of ghostly music filled their ears.

A secret door in the wall at the top of the stairs opened ... and Virginia stepped out. She looked very pale, and there was a little jewel box in her hand.

They all rushed to her. Mrs Otis took her in her arms; the Duke of Cheshire could not stop kissing her; the twins went into a wild war dance round the group.

'Where have you been?' said Mr Otis. 'We looked everywhere for you! Your mother's been frightened to death. You must never play these tricks again!'

'Except on the ghost! Except on the ghost!' shouted the twins, laughing and dancing about.

'My dear little girl, thank God you're safe,' said Mrs Otis. 'You must never leave my side again, Virginia.' And she kissed the shaking child and put a hand in the golden hair.

'Father,' said Virginia quietly, 'I've been with the Ghost. He's dead, and you must come and see him. He was very bad, but he was also really sorry for everything that he did. He gave me this box of beautiful jewels before he died.'

They stared at her in surprise, but she led them through the opening in the wall and down a narrow secret passage. It was lit by a candle that Washington was holding in his hand. Finally they came to a great black door. Virginia touched it, and it moved back heavily. They stepped into a little low room with a stone ceiling and one very small window.

There was a large iron ring in the wall, and they saw a skeleton chained to it. The skeleton was lying on the stone floor. It seemed to be reaching for a wooden plate and a water pot which had been placed just too far away from it.

Virginia put her hands together and began to pray silently. The others looked down at

the skeleton of Sir Simon de Canterville.

‘God has forgiven him,’ said Virginia, and a beautiful light seemed to appear around her face.

‘What a wonderful person you are!’ cried the young Duke of Cheshire, and he kissed her.



Four days later, at about eleven o'clock at night, they put Sir Simon de Canterville into the ground under the old tree, in the Garden of Death, where he wanted to be. Lord Canterville came especially from Wales to be there with the Otis family.

Virginia put white flowers on the ground and, as she did this, the moon came out from behind a cloud and filled the Garden of Death with a silver light. At the same time, a little night bird began to sing.

The next morning, before Lord Canterville left, he and Mr Otis talked about the jewels, which were quite beautiful and very valuable.

‘Lord Canterville,’ said Mr Otis, ‘these jewels belong to your family. I must ask you to take them to London with you. Virginia asks for only one thing — the box in which they were kept. Can she have it?’

‘My dear sir,’ said Lord Canterville, ‘your lovely little daughter has been a good friend to one of my family — Sir Simon — and we’ll always be grateful to her for that. She was wonderfully brave. Now, you remember that you bought the furniture *and* the ghost. The ghost’s jewels are now yours. They are clearly your daughter’s, and she must keep them. When she’s a woman, she’ll be pleased to have pretty things to wear. And if I dared to try and take the jewels, awful old Sir Simon would probably be back very quickly, giving me a terrible time!’

So Virginia kept the jewels, and she wore them in the spring of 1890 when she married the young Duke of Cheshire.

Some time after they were married, they went to Canterville Chase. On the day after they arrived, they walked to the old church. The Duchess had brought some lovely roses, and she put them under the old tree.

The Duke took her hands, and stood looking into her beautiful eyes.

‘Virginia,’ he said, ‘a wife should have no secrets from her husband.’

‘Dear Cecil!’ said Virginia. ‘I have no secrets from you.’

‘Yes, you have,’ he answered, smiling. ‘You never told me what happened to you when you were locked up with the ghost.’

‘Please don’t ask me, Cecil,’ she said. ‘I can’t tell you. Poor Sir Simon! I have so much to thank him for. Yes, don’t laugh, Cecil. I really do. He made me see what Life is, and what Death means, and why Love is stronger than both.’

The Duke kissed his wife lovingly.

‘You can have your secret if I can have your heart,’ he whispered. ‘You have always had that, Cecil,’ she said.

‘And you will tell our children one day?’ he said.

Virginia did not answer, but her face went prettily red.

## Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

### *A Study of Duty*

It was Lady Windermere's last party of the season, and her London house was even more crowded than usual. Six government ministers were there, and all the women wore their prettiest dresses. At the end of a long room, with Lady Windermere's finest pictures on the walls around her, a German princess was talking bad French and laughing loudly at everything that was said to her. Some of the most intelligent people in London were discussing important matters in the supper room. It was one of Lady Windermere's best parties, and the princess stayed until nearly half past eleven.

Lady Windermere was forty years old, childless, and had that enjoyment of pleasure that is the secret of staying young. When the princess had gone, she went to talk to the Duchess of Paisley.

'Where's my chiromantist?' she asked the Duchess.

'Your what, Gladys?' said the Duchess.

'My chiromantist. Duchess,' said Lady Windermere. 'I can't live without him.'

The Duchess tried to remember what a chiromantist was, but she couldn't. She hoped it was not the person who looked after Lady Windermere's feet!

'He comes to see my hand twice a week, regularly,' continued Lady Windermere. 'He's very interesting about it.'

'Really!' the Duchess said to herself. 'He looks after feet, but he does hands too. How terrible!'

'I must introduce him to you,' said Lady Windermere.

'Introduce him!' cried the Duchess. 'You mean he is here?'

'Of course he's here. He always comes to my parties. My hand, he tells me, shows that I can guess the future. And if my thumb was a little shorter, I'd be one of those people who are always very unhappy about the state of the world.'

'Oh, I understand now!' said the Duchess, feeling happier. 'He tells fortunes.'

'And misfortunes, too,' answered Lady Windermere. 'Plenty of them. For example, next year I'm in great danger on land and sea. It's all written down on my little finger, or on my hand - I forget which.'

'How exciting,' said the Duchess.

'Really, everyone should have their hands read once a month,' Lady Windermere continued. 'It doesn't change what's going to happen, but it's nice to be warned. Now, if someone doesn't go and fetch Mr Podgers at once, I'll have to go myself.'

'Let me go. Lady Windermere,' said a tall, handsome young man who was standing near them. He was listening to the conversation with an amused smile.

‘Thank you, Lord Arthur,’ said Lady Windermere. ‘But I’m afraid you wouldn’t recognize him.’

‘If he’s as wonderful as you say. Lady Windermere, I’m sure I’ll know him,’ said the young man. ‘But tell me what he’s like, and I’ll bring him to you immediately.’

‘Well, he isn’t like a chiromantist,’ said Lady Windermere. ‘I mean he isn’t mysterious or romantic-looking. He’s a small fat man, without much hair on his head, and with big gold glasses. He looks like a family doctor. People are annoying in that way. My musicians look like writers of poems, and my writers look like musicians. Ah, here’s Mr Podgers! Now, Mr Podgers, I want you to read the Duchess of Paisley’s hand. Duchess, you must take your glove off. No, not the left hand — the other one.’

‘Dear Gladys, I really don’t think it’s quite right,’ said the Duchess.

‘Nothing interesting is ever quite right,’ said Lady Windermere.

‘But I must introduce you. Duchess, this is Mr Podgers, my chiromantist. Mr Podgers, this is the Duchess of Paisley. If you say that she has more interesting hands than I have, I’ll never believe in you again.’

‘I’m sure, Gladys, that my hands are quite ordinary,’ said the Duchess seriously.

‘Let’s see,’ said Mr Podgers, looking at the little fat hand with its short square fingers. ‘The line of life is excellent. You’ll live to a great age, Duchess, and be very happy. The line of the heart —’

‘Now please find something embarrassing, Mr Podgers,’ cried Lady Windermere.

‘It would give me great pleasure,’ said Mr Podgers, ‘if the Duchess were ever embarrassing. But I’m afraid I can only see a loyal person with a strong sense of duty.’

‘Please continue, Mr Podgers,’ said the Duchess. She seemed to be enjoying it now.

‘Economy is one of your finest qualities,’ continued Mr Podgers, and Lady Windermere began laughing loudly.

‘Economy is a very good thing,’ said the Duchess. ‘When I married Paisley, he had eleven castles, and not one house that we could live in.’

‘And now he has twelve houses and not one castle,’ said Lady Windermere. ‘You must read some more hands for us, Mr Podgers. You, Sir Thomas, show Mr Podgers yours.’

A cheerful-looking old gentleman came forward and held out a thick, strong hand with a very long third finger.

Mr Podgers looked at it. ‘You’re an adventurous person,’ he said. ‘There are four long voyages in your past, and one in the future. Three times you’ve been on ships that have gone down to the bottom of the sea. No, only twice, but you’ll be in danger of it on your next journey. You’re always on time for appointments, and you love collecting things. You had a serious illness between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. You hate cats.’

‘How very clever!’ said Sir Thomas. ‘You must read my wife’s hand, too.’

‘Your second wife’s,’ said Mr Podgers quietly, still keeping Sir Thomas’s hand in his.

'Your second wife's. I shall be glad to.'

But the lady did not want other people to know about her past or her future, and she was not the only one. A number of people seemed afraid to face the strange little man with his fixed smile, his gold eyeglasses, and his bright little green eyes.

But Lord Arthur Savile was watching Mr Podgers with a great amount of interest, and he was filled with the desire to have his own hand read. He was a little shy about asking the chiromantist, so he asked Lady Windermere. Did she think Mr Podgers would mind reading his hand?

'Of course he won't mind,' said Lady Windermere. 'That's what he's here for. All my guests do what I tell them to do. But I must warn you that I shall tell Sybil everything he says.'

'You will?' said Lord Arthur.

'Yes,' said Lady Windermere. 'She's coming to lunch with me tomorrow. If Mr Podgers discovers that you have a bad temper, or a wife hidden away somewhere, I'll certainly tell her about it.'

Lord Arthur smiled. 'I'm not afraid,' he said. 'Sybil knows me as well as I know her.'

'I'm a little sorry to hear you say that,' said Lady Windermere. 'A future wife ought not to know everything about the man she's going to marry.'

She turned to the small fat man.

'Mr Podgers, Lord Arthur Savile would like you to read his hand,' she said. 'Don't tell him that he's going to marry one of the most beautiful girls in London, because that was in the newspapers a month ago. But be sure to tell us something nice. Lord Arthur is one of my special favourites.'

'I'll try,' said Mr Podgers.

But when he saw Lord Arthur's hand, he became pale and said nothing. His body seemed to shake, and his fat fingers grew cold.

Lord Arthur noticed these things, and for the first time in his life he felt afraid. He wanted to rush out of the room, but he controlled himself.

'I'm waiting, Mr Podgers,' he said.

'We're all waiting,' cried Lady Windermere impatiently. 'I believe Arthur is going on the stage, and you're afraid to tell him.'

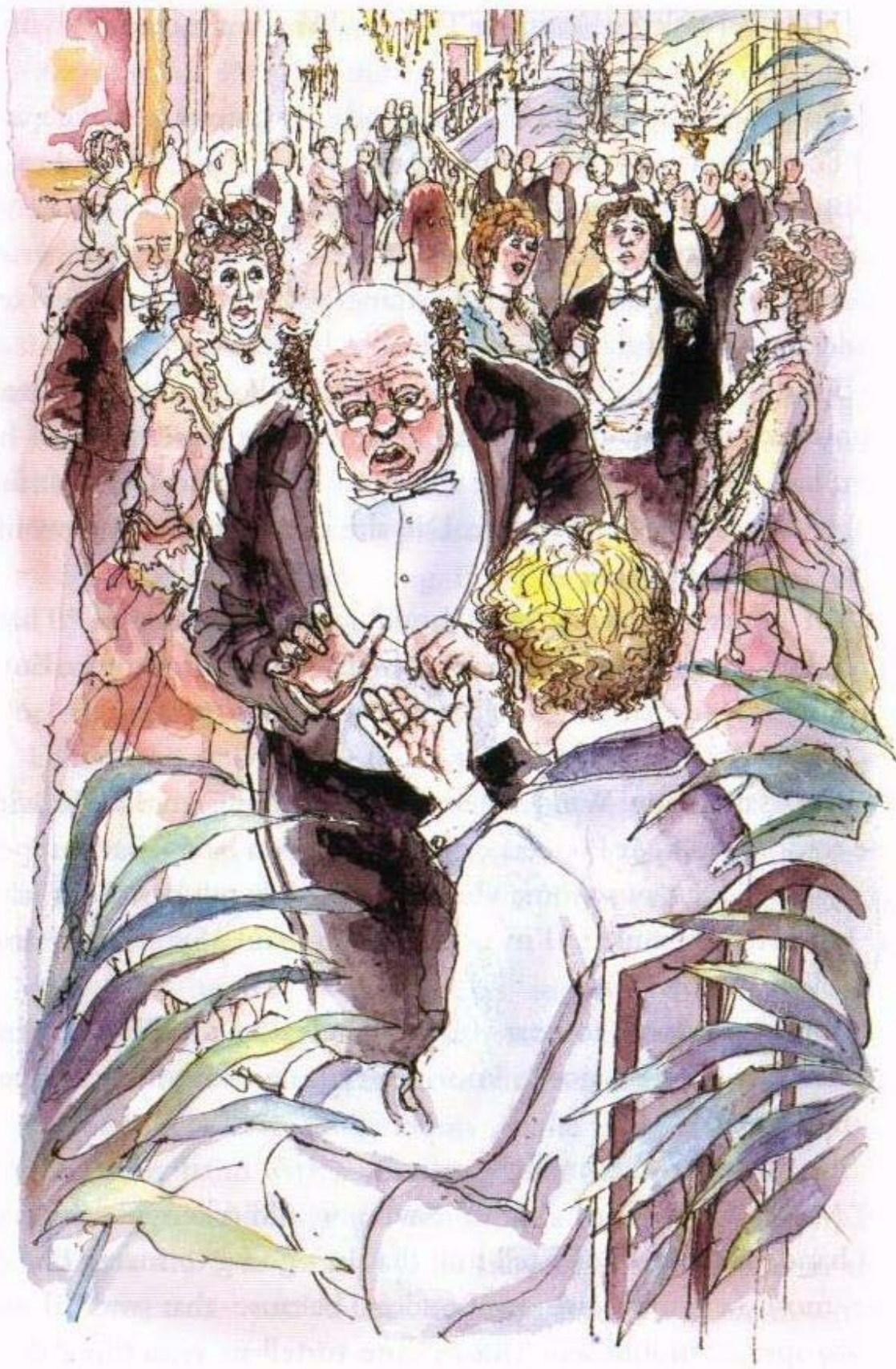
But the chiromantist did not reply. Suddenly he dropped Lord Arthur's right hand and took his left. He bent down very low to examine it and his glasses almost touched it.

'What is it?' said Lady Windermere.

For a moment the chiromantist's face became white with shock and fear, but at last he said to Lady Windermere with a forced smile, 'It's the hand of a very nice young man.'

'Of course it is!' answered Lady Windermere. 'But will he be a good husband? That's what I want to know.'





*But when he saw Lord Arthur's hand, he became  
pale and said nothing.*



‘All nice young men are good husbands,’ said Mr Podgers.

‘Yes, yes!’ said Lady Windermere. ‘But I want details, Mr Podgers. Details are what matter. What’s going to happen to Lord Arthur?’

‘Well, Lord Arthur will go on a journey soon,’ said Mr Podgers. ‘Oh yes, after his marriage, of course!’

‘And lose one of his relatives,’ said Mr Podgers. ‘Not his sister, I hope?’ said Lady Windermere.

‘Certainly not his sister,’ answered Mr Podgers. ‘Not a close relative.’

‘Is that all?’ said Lady Windermere. She did not look pleased.

‘I won’t have anything interesting to tell Sybil tomorrow. Nobody cares about relatives who aren’t close these days — it’s not fashionable. Now let’s all go in and have supper.’

But Lord Arthur had a terrible feeling of fear — the fear of something very bad. He only just heard Lady Windermere’s call to follow her and the others into the next room for supper. He thought about Sybil Merton, and his eyes began to fill with tears. Could something come between them? Suddenly, Mr Podger came back into the room. When he saw Lord Arthur, the chiromantist stopped suddenly and his fat face went a greenish-yellow colour. The two men looked at each other, and for a moment there was silence.

‘The Duchess has left one of her gloves here,’ said Mr Podger at last. ‘She asked me to bring it to her. Oh, here it is.’

‘Mr Podgers, I want you to give me an answer — a true answer — to the question that I am going to ask you,’ said Lord Arthur.

‘Another time, Lord Arthur,’ said Mr Podgers. ‘I must take the Duchess her glove.’

‘Don’t go,’ said Lord Arthur. ‘The Duchess is in no hurry.’

He walked across the room and held out his hand.

‘Tell me what you saw there,’ he said. ‘I must know. I’m not a child.’

Mr Podgers’ eyes looked unhappy behind his glasses, and he moved from one foot to the other.

‘What makes you think that I saw anything else in your hand Lord Arthur?’ he asked the other man.

‘I know you did. I demand that you tell me what it was,’ said Lord Arthur. ‘I’ll pay you. I’ll give you a hundred pounds.’

The chiromantist’s green eyes became bright — but only for a moment.

‘I’ll send you a cheque tomorrow,’ said Lord Arthur. ‘Where shall I send it?’

'Let me give you my card,' said Mr Podgers. And he gave Lord Arthur a rather large card. On it was printed:

MR SEPTIMUS R. PODGERS <i>Chiromantist</i> 103a West Moon Street, London
--

'Be quick,' cried Lord Arthur. His face was pale, but he held out his hand.

Mr Podgers looked nervously round. 'It will take a little time, Lord Arthur,' he said.

'Be quick, sir!' cried Lord Arthur again.

Mr Podgers took off his glasses, cleaned them, and put them back on again. Then he smiled.

'I'm ready now,' he said.



Ten minutes later, Lord Arthur Savile rushed out of Lady Windermere's house. His face was white with terror and his eyes were wild with unhappiness.

The night was very cold, and there was a sharp wind, but his hands were hot with fever and his face burned like fire. Once he stopped under one of the gas lamps in the square. He looked at his hands, and thought he could already see the stain of blood on them. A faint cry came from his shaking lips.

Murder! That is what the chiromantist saw there. Murder! And the night seemed to know it. The dark corners of the streets were full of murder. Murder laughed at him from the roofs of the houses.

'Murder! Murder!' he repeated, as he walked and walked through the city. The sound of his own voice made him shake. He felt a mad desire to stop a man who was passing and tell him everything.

At the corner of Rich Street, he saw two men reading a large notice on the wall. He went to look at it. As he came near, he saw the word 'MURDER' printed in black letters. It was a police advertisement offering a reward for information about a man between thirty and forty years of age, with a scar on the right side of his face.

Lord Arthur read it again and again. Would the man be caught? How did he get the scar?

'Perhaps one day my name will appear on a notice like this,' he thought. 'Lord Arthur Savile – wanted for murder!'

The thought made him sick, and he hurried into the night. He did not know where he went, and it was just before daylight when he found himself in Piccadilly. By the time he

reached his home in Belgrave Square, the sky was a faint blue, and birds were beginning to sing in the gardens.



When Lord Arthur woke, it was twelve o'clock. The midday sun was coming through the curtains of his room. He got up and looked out of the window. Some children were playing happily below him in the square, and the street was crowded with people on their way to the park.

He had a bath and some breakfast, then lit a cigarette and sat down to think. On the shelf, facing him, was a large photograph of Sybil Merton as he had seen her first. It had been at Lady Noel's party.

The small, perfectly shaped head was bending a little to one side. It seemed that the thin, pretty neck could only just carry the weight of so much beauty. The lips were not quite closed, and they seemed ready to make sweet music. All the innocence and sweetness of a young girl looked out from the dreamy eyes.

As Lord Arthur looked at the photograph, he was filled with the terrible pity that comes from love. How could he marry her now, when murder lay ahead? At any moment he might have to do the awful thing that was written in his hand. What happiness could there be for them with that in his future?

He must stop the marriage — that was clear to him. He loved Sybil with all his heart, but he knew what his duty was. He had no right to marry her until after the murder.

He must do the murder first - and soon. Many men would prefer to do nothing. They would let time decide what happened. But Lord Arthur's sense of duty was too strong for that.

For a time, it is true, he felt badly about what he had to do. But these feelings did not continue. The wild terror of the night before was gone. He saw his duty clearly now, and he was going to do it.

There was only one question that troubled him. Who was going to be murdered? He knew that there must be a body in a murder, not just a murderer. Lord Arthur was not an especially clever person, so he had no enemies. And this was not the time, he felt, to satisfy his private dislike of someone.

So he made a list of his friends and relatives on a piece of paper, and after much thought he chose Lady Clementina Beauchamp from the list. He had always been very fond of Lady Clem, as everyone called her. She lived in Curzon Street and was his own second cousin — the daughter of his mother's cousin. This dear old lady's death could not possibly make him any richer. He already had plenty of money. She seemed to him to be just the right person. So, feeling that a delay would be unfair to Sybil, he decided to make his arrangements immediately.

First, of course, he had to write his cheque for the chiromantist. He sat down at the

writing table near the window and did this. Then he put the cheque for a hundred pounds into an envelope and told a man-servant to take it to Podgers' address in West Moon Street. Next, he dressed to go out.

As he was leaving the room to go to his club, he looked back at Sybil Merton's photograph.

'She'll never know what I'm doing for her,' he told himself. 'I'll keep the secret hidden in my heart.'

On the way to the club, he stopped his carriage at a flower shop and sent Sybil a beautiful basket of spring flowers.

At the club, he went straight to the library, rang the bell, and ordered the waiter to bring him a drink and a book on poisons.

He had decided that poison was the best method. It was safe, sure and quiet, and it was not violent.

In Erskine's book on poisons, he found an interesting and complete description of the qualities and effects of aconitine, written in quite clear English. Aconitine seemed to be the poison he wanted. It worked quickly — it was almost immediate in its effect. It was perfectly painless when it was taken in the form of a capsule. He made a note of the amount that was necessary to cause death. Then he put the book back in its place on the shelf in the club library, and left.

He walked to Pestle and Humbey's, the famous London chemists. Mr Pestle himself came out to serve Lord Arthur. He was surprised at the order, and he asked about a doctor's note.

Lord Arthur explained that the poison was for a large dog that he had to destroy. 'The dog has already bitten one of the servants,' he said.

Mr Pestle was satisfied. He admired Lord Arthur's knowledge of poisons, and he had the capsule prepared immediately.

Lord Arthur put the capsule into a pretty silver box that he saw in a shop window in Bond Street. He threw away Pestle and Humbey's ugly little box, and went immediately to Lady Clementinas.

'Well, Arthur!' said the old lady, when he entered the room. 'Why haven't you been to see me recently, you bad boy?'

'My dear Lady Clem, I never have a free moment,' said Lord Arthur, smiling.

'I suppose you go about all day with that lovely Miss Sybil Merton, buying pretty things and making sweet lovers' talk,' said Lady Clementina.

'I promise you that I haven't seen Sybil for twenty-four hours, Lady Clem,' replied Lord Arthur.

'You haven't?' said Lady Clementina. 'Why not?'

'Of course,' said Lady Clementina. 'And that's the only reason you come to see an ugly old woman like myself. Here I am, a poor sick woman with a bad temper. Lady

Jensen sends me all the worst French story-books she can find. Without them, I don't think I could get through the day. I see as many doctors as I can, but they can't even cure my stomach trouble.'

'I've brought you a cure for that. Lady Clem,' said Lord Arthur seriously.

'Have you?' said the old lady.

'Yes,' said Lord Arthur. 'It's a wonderful thing, invented by an American.'

'I don't think I like anything invented by Americans, Arthur,' said Lady Clementina. 'I read an American book the other day, and it was very silly.'

'Oh, but there's nothing silly about this. Lady Clem! It's the perfect cure. You must promise to try it.' And Lord Arthur took the little box out of his pocket and gave it to her.

'Well, the box is very pretty, Arthur,' she said. 'Is it really a present? That's very kind of you. And is this the wonderful medicine? It looks like a sweet. I'll take it immediately.'

'No, no. Lady Clem!' cried Lord Arthur. He caught hold of her hand. 'You mustn't do that. If you take it when you aren't in pain, it might do you a lot of harm. Wait until you have a stomach ache, and take it then. You'll be surprised at the result.'

'I'd like to take it now,' said Lady Clem, holding the little capsule up to the light. 'I'm sure it's nice. I hate doctors, but I love medicines. But I'll keep it until my next attack.'

'And when will that be?' Lord Arthur asked quickly. 'Will it be soon?'

'I hope not for a week,' she said. 'I had a very bad time yesterday morning.'

'But you will have one before the end of the month, Lady Clem?' asked Lord Arthur.

'I'm afraid so,' said Lady Clementina. She smiled at him 'You're very kind to worry about me, Arthur, dear. But now you'll have to leave me. I have to go out to dinner with some very boring people. Goodbye. Give my love to Sybil. And thank you very much for the American medicine.'

'You won't forget to take it. Lady Clem, will you?' said Lord Arthur.

'Of course I won't, you silly boy,' she replied. 'You're really very kind. I'll write and tell you if I want any more.'

Lord Arthur left the house feeling very happy.

That night, he went to see Sybil Merton.

'Sybil,' he said. 'Because of a friend, I've been put in a very ... difficult position. I have a duty to put this matter right, and until I do I'm not a free man. I'm afraid our marriage will have to wait.'

Sybil threw herself into his arms and began to cry.

'Please be patient, dear,' he said.

He stayed with her until nearly midnight. He told her that he loved her, and promised that everything would be all right in the end.

When he got home, he wrote a letter (full of words, but explaining little) to Sybil's father.

And early the next day, he left for Venice.



In Venice Lord Arthur met his brother. Lord Surbiton, who had come from Corfu in his sailing boat. The two young men spent two very pleasant weeks together, but Lord Arthur was not completely happy. Every day he looked at the list of 'Deaths' in *The Times newspaper*, expecting to see a notice of Lady Clementina's death. But every day there was nothing. Had something happened to stop her taking the aconitine?

Sybil's letters made him sad, too. They were full of love, but she seemed to be unhappy. And sometimes he felt that he would never see her again.

After two weeks. Lord Surbiton got bored with Venice and the two brothers sailed down the coast to Ravenna. But after a time, Lord Arthur became anxious about Lady Clementina and he returned to Venice by train.

There were several messages for him at his hotel, and he opened them quickly. Everything had been successful! Lady Clementina had died quite suddenly five days ago!

His first thought was for Sybil, and he sent her a message – he was returning immediately to London. The other two messages for him were from his mother, the Duchess, and from Mr Mansfield, Lady Clementina's lawyer.

The old lady had gone to dinner with the Duchess on the night of her death. She had been very happy and full of fun, but had gone home rather early because of stomach trouble. In the morning she was found dead in her bed. The doctor said that her death was peaceful.

A few days before she died, Lady Clementina had made her will. In it she left her London house and all her furniture to Lord Arthur. The value of the property was not great, but Mr Mansfield wanted Lord Arthur to return immediately. There were a lot of bills to pay, he said.

Lord Arthur was deeply affected by Lady Clementina's kindness to him, and he blamed Mr Podgers — in a way — for her death. But his love of Sybil was stronger than any other feeling. He was glad that he had done the right thing.

The Mertons were happy to see him. Sybil made him promise that nothing would ever come between them again. The marriage was arranged for 7th June, and life seemed bright and beautiful again to Lord Arthur.

One day, he was in Lady Clementina's house with Mr Mansfield and Sybil. They were burning old papers and clearing things out of drawers. Suddenly Sybil gave a happy little cry.

'What have you found, Sybil?' said Lord Arthur, smiling.

'This little silver box, Arthur,' said Sybil. 'Isn't it beautiful? Please give it to me!'

It was the box that had held the aconitine.





*...please can I have the sweet too?*



Lord Arthur had almost forgotten about the box and the poison. Now, he remembered the terrible worry that he had suffered for Sybil. It seemed strange that she was the first person to remind him of it.

But he said, 'Of course you can have it, Sybil. I gave it to poor Lady Clem myself.'

'Oh, thank you, Arthur,' said Sybil. 'And please can I have the sweet too? I didn't know that Lady Clem liked sweets.'

Lord Arthur's face went pale, and when he spoke his voice was almost a whisper 'Sweet, Sybil? What do you mean?' he said slowly.

'There's just one in the box,' she said 'It looks quite old, and I don't really want to eat it. What's the matter, Arthur? You've gone very white.'

Lord Arthur rushed across the room and took the box. The capsule was there, with the aconitine liquid still in it. Lady Clementina had died a natural death!

The shock was terrible. He threw the capsule into the fire, and sat down and put his head in his hands.



When Lord Arthur delayed the marriage for a second time, Mr Merton was quite upset. His wife had already ordered her dress for the wedding, and she tried to make Sybil take back her promise to marry Lord Arthur. But Sybil's love for the young man was too strong. Her mother could not say anything to change that.

Lord Arthur felt terrible for several days after his shock. But soon he realized what he had to do. Poison had failed. Next, he would have to try a bomb. That seemed sensible.

He looked again at his list of friends and relatives. After careful thought, he decided to blow up his uncle, the Dean of Chichester.

The Dean was an important churchman. He also had a wonderful collection of clocks. It seemed to Lord Arthur that this interest in clocks gave him a perfect opportunity.

Where would he get a clock-bomb? This was, of course, a problem. Suddenly he thought of his friend Rouvaloff. Rouvaloff was a young Russian who strongly disliked the government of his country. He knew a lot about bombs and where to get them. Lord Arthur went to see the young man without delay.

'So you're taking a serious interest in politics?' said Rouvaloff, when Lord Arthur explained what he wanted.

Lord Arthur hated pretending. He had to say that he was not interested in politics. He wanted the bomb for a family matter.

Rouvaloff looked at him in surprise, but he saw that his friend was quite serious. He wrote an address on a piece of paper, and a letter introducing Lord Arthur, and gave them to him.

Lord Arthur thanked him, then took a carriage to Soho. There he walked until he came to a little street full of small houses. He knocked on the door of a little green house at

one end.

After some minutes, the door was opened by a rough-looking German. 'What do you want?' he asked Lord Arthur.

Lord Arthur gave him the letter from Rouvaloff.

In England, the German was known as Winckelkopf. He read the letter and invited Lord Arthur into a very dark little room.

'I want to discuss some business with you,' said Lord Arthur. 'My name is Smith — Mr Robert Smith — and I want you to make me a clock-bomb.'

'I'm pleased to meet you, Lord Arthur,' said the cheerful little German, laughing.

'You know me?' said Lord Arthur.

'Yes, I know who you are,' said Winckelkopf. 'But please don't worry. It's my duty to know everybody, and I remember seeing you one evening at Lady Windermere's house. I hope she's well. Will you sit with me while I finish my breakfast? Let me get you a glass of wine.'

Lord Arthur was very surprised that he had been recognized. But he was soon sitting at the table, drinking a glass of very good German wine.

'Clock-bombs are not very useful when you are sending a bomb abroad,' said Winckelkopf. 'They usually explode before they reach their correct destination. But if you want to use one in this country, I can give you an excellent one. Can I ask who it is intended for? If it's for the police, I'm afraid I can't do anything for you. The English detectives are really our best friends. They're very stupid, and because of this we can do exactly what we like. I wouldn't want to kill even one of them.'

'It's not for the police,' answered Lord Arthur.

'Then who...?' began Winckelkopf.

'It's intended for the Dean of Chichester,' said Lord Arthur.

'Oh dear! I didn't know that you felt so strongly about religion, Lord Arthur,' said Winckelkopf. 'Not many young men do these days.'

'I'm afraid I don't deserve your high opinion, Winckelkopf,' said Lord Arthur. 'The fact is, I really know nothing about religion.'

'So it's a private matter?'

'Yes,' said Lord Arthur.

Winckelkopf left the room. He returned a few minutes later with a pretty little French clock. A small golden figure of Liberty stood on the top of it.

Lord Arthur smiled when he saw it. 'That's just what I want,' he cried. 'Now tell me how it works.'



*'That's just what I want,' he cried. 'Now tell me how it works.'*

'Ah! That's my secret,' answered Winckelkopf. 'Tell me when you want the explosion, and I'll arrange it. It will happen at exactly the right moment.'

'Well, today's Tuesday, and if you could send it to the Dean immediately...' began Lord Arthur.

'That's impossible,' said Winckelkopf. 'I have a lot of important work for some friends in Moscow. But I can send it tomorrow.'

'Oh, that will be soon enough,' said Lord Arthur. 'If it's delivered tomorrow night, or on Thursday morning, that will be fine. Friday, exactly at midday, would be perfect for the explosion. The Dean is always at home at midday on Fridays.'

'Friday at midday,' repeated Winckelkopf, and he made a note of the time.

'And now,' said Lord Arthur, standing up, 'how much should I pay you?'

'It's a very small matter, Lord Arthur,' said Winckelkopf. 'I can't really ask for anything. Shall we say five pounds? I'm happy to help a friend of Rouvaloff's.'

'But I must pay you for your time and trouble, Winckelkopf,' said Lord Arthur.

'Oh, that's nothing! It's a pleasure I don't work for money. I live only for my art.'

Lord Arthur put five pounds on the table, thanked the German for his kindness, and left the house.



Lord Arthur was almost too excited to sleep for the next two days. On Friday, at twelve o'clock midday, he went to his club to wait for news.

All afternoon, one of the club servants put up messages on the notice board, but they were all about horse races, parliament or the weather. At four o'clock, the evening newspapers arrived, and Lord Arthur took several of them into the library. He read them carefully, but there was nothing in them about the Dean of Chichester.

He went to see Winckelkopf the next day. The young German apologized many times, and offered to give him another clock-bomb. But Lord Arthur refused. He had decided that perhaps bombs were not the best idea.

Two days later, he was going upstairs at home when his mother, the Duchess, called out to him. Lord Arthur came back down and she showed him a letter from the Dean of Chichester's daughter.

'Jane writes very interesting letters,' the Duchess said. 'You really must read this one, Arthur.'

Lord Arthur read the letter quickly.

*The Deanery, Chichester*  
*27th May*

My dearest Aunt,

We have had great fun with a clock that an unknown admirer sent to Father last Thursday. It arrived in a wooden box from London. Father thinks that it was sent by someone who has read his book, *What is Liberty?* On the top of the clock there was a

small figure of Liberty.

Father put the clock above the fireplace in the library, and we were all sitting there on Friday morning when the clock sounded twelve. We heard a funny noise, then some smoke came from the bottom of the figure, and Liberty fell off! She broke her nose on the stone fireplace!

Maria was quite frightened, but it looked very funny. James and I laughed loudly, and even Father was amused. When we examined it, we found that it is an alarm clock. You put in some stuff to make a small explosion. Then it wakes you up with a loud noise at the hour you choose.

Father said it could not stay in the library because of the noise, so Reggie carried it away to the schoolroom. Now he makes small explosions there all day.

Reggie has just made another explosion, and Father has ordered the clock to be sent to the garden room. I don't think he likes it as much as he did at first, although he is pleased that someone sent it to him. It shows that people read his books and learn from them.

We all send our love and hope that Uncle Cecil's toe is better.

Your loving niece,  
Jane Percy

Lord Arthur looked very serious and unhappy about the letter, and that made the Duchess laugh.

'My dear Arthur,' she cried, 'I'll never show you a young lady's letter again. But what can I say about the clock? I'd like to have one myself.'

'I don't like them,' said Lord Arthur, with a sad smile. He kissed his mother and left the room.

When he got upstairs, he threw himself into a chair, and his eyes filled with tears.

'I've done my best to complete this murder, but on both occasions I've failed,' he thought. 'And it hasn't been my fault! I've tried to do my duty!'



At half past seven. Lord Arthur dressed and went to the club.

The doorman gave him a letter. It was from Winckelkopf, inviting him to come the next evening and look at an umbrella-bomb that had just arrived from Geneva. The umbrella exploded when you put it up.

Lord Arthur threw away the letter and went out. He walked down to the River Thames and sat for hours by the water. The moon looked down through an opening in the clouds. Sometimes a river boat went past him. The railway lights changed from green to red as trains went across the bridge. At twelve o'clock the big bell of the clock at Westminster sounded, and the night seemed to shake. Then the railway lights went out, and the noises of the city became quieter.

At two o'clock Lord Arthur stood up and walked slowly along beside the river. After some minutes, he saw a man looking over the riverside wall. As he came nearer, the man looked up, and the gaslight lit up his face.

It was Mr Podgers, the chiromantist! It was impossible to make a mistake about the

fat, unhealthy face, the gold glasses, the weak smile, and the greedy mouth.

Lord Arthur stopped. A wonderful idea came into his mind, and he stepped quietly up behind Mr Podgers. Moving quickly, he picked up the chiromantist by the legs, and threw him over the wall into the river! There was a cry, the sound of a body hitting the water, and then silence.

Lord Arthur looked down, but there was no sign of Mr Podgers. Once he thought that he saw the fat little body swimming towards the steps at the bottom of the bridge. But when the moon came out from behind a cloud, there was nothing there.

'I've succeeded at last!' he thought. Then Sybil's name came to his lips.

'Have you dropped something, sir?' said a voice behind him suddenly.

He turned round and saw a policeman.

'Nothing important,' he answered, smiling.



For the next few days Lord Arthur waited with feelings of hope, then of fear. There were moments when he almost expected Mr Podgers to walk into the room. Twice he went to the chiromantist's address in West Moon Street, but he was not brave enough to ring the bell.

Finally news came. He was sitting in the smoking-room of his club, having tea, when a waiter came in with the evening newspapers. A moment later Lord Arthur was turning the pages of one of them when he saw this:

*DEATH OF A CHIROMANTIST*

*Yesterday morning, at seven o'clock, the body of Mr Septimus R. Podgers, the famous chiromantist, was washed on to the shore from the river at Greenwich, just in front of the Ship Hotel. The unfortunate gentleman disappeared a few days ago. It is believed that he killed himself after working too hard.*

Lord Arthur rushed out of the club with the newspaper still in his hand. He went straight to the Mertons' house. Sybil saw him from a window, and she guessed from the look on his face that he brought good news. She ran down to meet him.

'Arthur, what— ?'

'My dear Sybil,' cried Lord Arthur, 'let's be married tomorrow!'

'You silly boy! We haven't ordered the wedding cake yet!' said Sybil, laughing through her tears.



The wedding was three weeks later. The Dean of Chichester read the marriage service beautifully. Everybody agreed that they had never seen a happier-looking pair than Lord

Arthur and Sybil.

Some years afterwards, Lady Windermere was on a visit to Lord and Lady Arthur Savile's lovely old home in the country. She and Sybil were sitting in the garden.

'Are you happy, Sybil?' asked Lady Windermere. 'Dear Lady Windermere, of course I'm happy!' said Sybil. 'Are you?'

'I have no time to be happy, Sybil,' said Lady Windermere. 'I always like the last person who is introduced to me. But when I know people, I get bored with them.'

'Are you still interested in chiromancy, Lady Windermere?' asked Sybil, looking at her guest's beautiful hands.

'Ah! You remember that nasty Mr Podgers, do you?' said Lady Windermere. 'He made me hate chiromancy. I'm interested in other things now.'

'You mustn't say anything against chiromancy here, Lady Windermere,' said Sybil. 'It's the only subject that Arthur doesn't like people to laugh about. He's quite serious about it.'

'You don't mean that he believes in it, Sybil?'

'Ask him, Lady Windermere,' said Sybil. 'Here he is.'

And Lord Arthur came up the garden with yellow roses in his hand, and their two children dancing round him.

'Lord Arthur,' said Lady Windermere.

'Yes, Lady Windermere,' said Lord Arthur.

'You don't believe in chiromancy, do you?'

'Of course I do,' said the young man, smiling.

'But why?' asked Lady Windermere.

'Because of chiromancy, I have all the happiness in my life,' he said, and sat down in a garden chair. He gave his wife the roses and looked into her lovely eyes. 'Because of chiromancy, I have Sybil.'

'How silly!' cried Lady Windermere. 'I've never heard anything so silly in all my life.'



## **The Sphinx Without a Secret**

One afternoon I was sitting outside the Cafe de la Paix in Paris, watching the people passing along the street. I was wondering why some people were very poor while others were so rich. Suddenly I heard somebody call my name. I turned round and saw Lord Murchison. We had not met since we were at Oxford University together, nearly ten years before, and I was pleased to see him again. We shook hands warmly.

I had liked him very much at Oxford, and we had been very good friends. He had been so handsome, so full of life, and a very honest young man. We used to say that he would be the best person in the world if he was not always so honest. But I think we really admired him for his honesty.

Now, looking at him ten years later, he seemed different. He looked anxious and worried, and he seemed to have doubts about something. I could not believe that he was in doubt about religion or politics, because he always had such definite opinions about everything. So I thought the problem must be a woman. I asked him if he was married yet.

‘I don’t understand women well enough to marry one,’ he answered.

‘My dear Gerald,’ I said, ‘it is our job to love women, not to understand them.’

‘I can’t love anyone that I can’t trust,’ he answered. ‘I think you have a mystery in your life, Gerald,’ I said. ‘Tell me about it.’

‘Let’s go for a drive,’ he answered. ‘It’s too crowded here. No, not a yellow carriage — there, that dark green one will be all right.’

And in a few moments we were driven away from the cafe.

‘Where shall we go to?’ I said.

‘Oh, I don’t mind!’ he answered. ‘The restaurant in the Bois de Boulogne? We can have dinner there, and you can tell me about yourself.’

‘I want to hear about you first,’ I said. ‘Tell me about your mystery.’

He took a little leather case from his pocket and gave it to me. I opened it. Inside was a photograph of a woman. She was tall and beautiful, with long hair, and large secretive eyes. Her clothes looked very expensive.

‘What do you think of that face,’ he said. ‘Is it an honest face?’

I examined the face in the photograph carefully. It seemed to me to be the face of a woman with a secret. But I could not say if that secret was good or bad. The beauty of the face was full of mystery, and the faint smile on the lips made me think of the smile of the Egyptian Sphinx in the moonlight. Or was it the mysterious smile that you sometimes see on the face of Leonardo’s painting, the Mona Lisa, in the Louvre in Paris?

‘Well,’ he cried impatiently, ‘what do you think?’

‘A beautiful sphinx,’ I answered. ‘Tell me all about her.’

‘Not now,’ he said. ‘After dinner.’

When we were drinking our coffee and smoking our cigarettes after dinner, I

reminded him, and he told me this story:

‘One evening,’ he said, ‘I was walking down Bond Street in London at about five o’clock. There were a lot of carriages, and the traffic was moving very slowly. There was a small yellow, carriage on my side of the road which, for some reason or other, caught my attention. As the carriage passed, I saw the face that I showed you in the photograph earlier. It went straight to my heart. All that night, I thought about the face, and all the next day. I looked for the yellow carriage in the usual places, but I couldn’t find it. I began to think that the beautiful stranger was only something from a dream.

‘About a week later, I went to have dinner with Madame de Rastail. Dinner was for eight o’clock, but at half past eight we were still waiting in the sitting room. Finally the servant threw open the door and said "Lady Alroy". A woman entered the room — and it was the woman I was looking for! The woman in the yellow carriage.

‘She came into the sitting room very slowly, looking lovely in a grey dress. I was pleased and excited when Madame de Rastail asked me to take Lady Alroy in to dinner. Lady Alroy then sat next to me at the table.

‘After we sat down, I said quite innocently, “I think I saw you in Bond Street not long ago, Lady Alroy.”

‘She became very pale, and said to me in a low voice, “Please don’t talk so loudly. Someone may hear you.”

‘I felt unhappy about such a bad start to our conversation, and I started talking quickly about French theatre and other unimportant things. She spoke very little, always in the same low musical voice. She seemed to be afraid that someone might be listening.

‘I fell madly in love, and I was excited by the mystery that seemed to surround her. I wanted to know more - much more -about this mysterious lady.

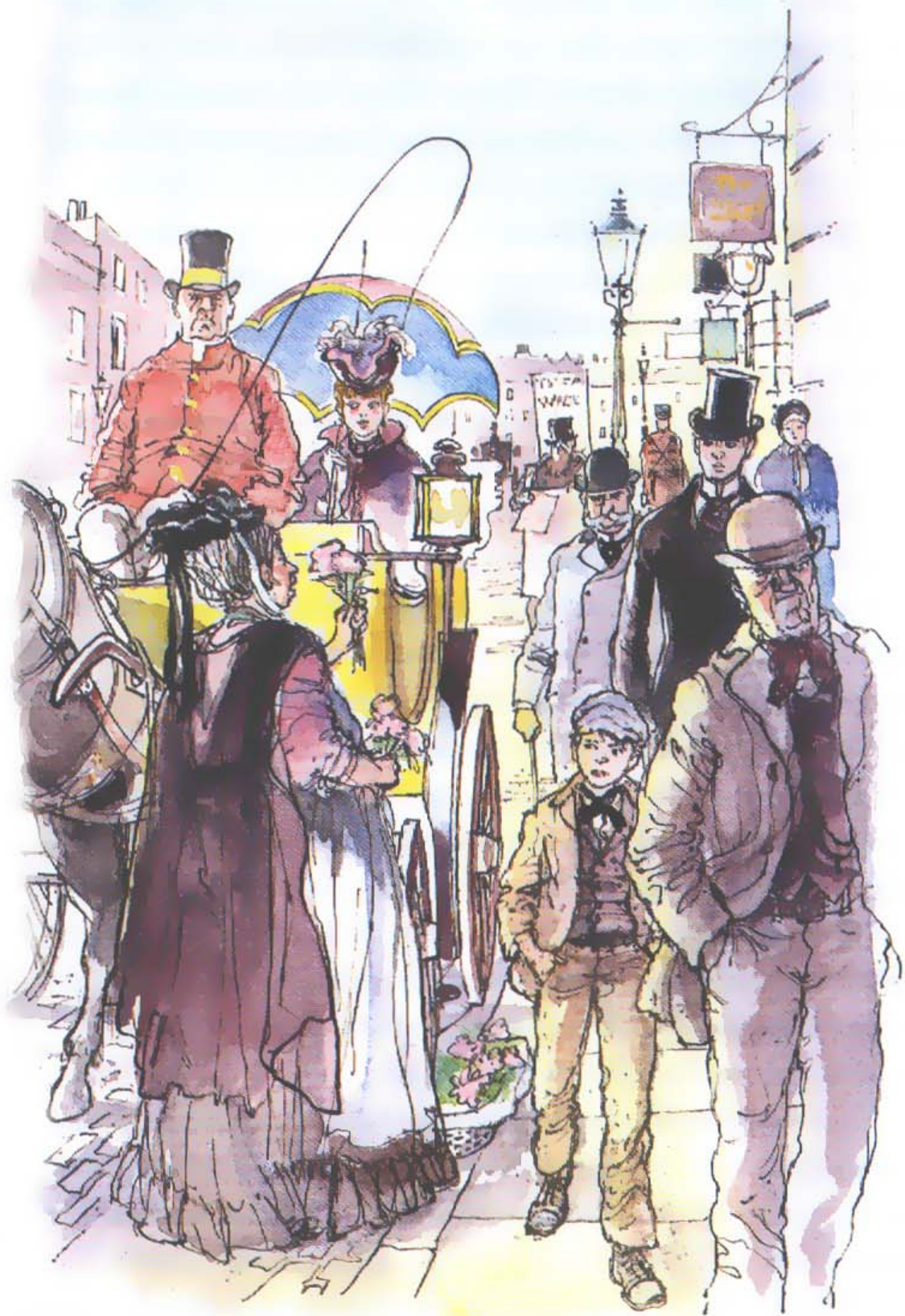
‘She left very soon after dinner, and when she was going, I asked if I could visit her. She said nothing for a moment, looked round to see if anyone was near us, and then said, “Yes. Tomorrow at a quarter to five.”

‘I asked Madame de Rastail to tell me about her, but I learned only that her husband had died, and she lived in a beautiful house in the most expensive part of London. I left soon after that, and went home.

‘The next day I arrived at her London house at exactly a quarter to five. I asked to see Lady Alroy but I was told by a servant that she had just gone out.

‘I went to the club, very unhappy and quite confused. After some thought, I wrote a letter. I asked her if I could try again another afternoon.

‘I had no answer for several days, but at last I got a letter saying that I could visit her on Sunday at four o’clock. At the end of the letter there was a strange note: “Please don’t write to me here again,” it said. “I will explain when I see you.”



*'There was a small yellow carriage near my side of the road. . .'*

‘On Sunday she was at home when I visited her, and she was perfectly nice to me. But when I was leaving, she said, “If you want to write to me again, will you address your letter to: Mrs Knox, Whitaker’s Library, Green Street? There are reasons why I can’t receive letters in my own house.”

‘After that, I saw her often. She continued to be pleasant and mysterious. I thought for a time that she might be in the power of a man, but I could not believe it.

‘At last I decided to ask her to be my wife. I wrote to her at the library and asked her to see me the following Monday, at six o’clock. She answered yes, and I was wonderfully happy. I was very much in love with her, you understand. Perhaps because of the mystery surrounding her. No, no, that’s not right! I loved the woman. The mystery worried me, it’s true. It made me angry.’

‘So you discovered the answer to the mystery?’ I cried.

‘In a way,’ he answered. ‘On Monday I had lunch with my uncle in his house in Regent’s Park. After lunch, I wanted some exercise, and I decided to walk to Piccadilly. The shortest way is through a lot of poor little streets. I was going along one of these when I suddenly saw Lady Alroy in front of me. Her face was half-hidden by a large hat, but there was no doubt in my mind.

‘She was walking fast. When she came to the last house in the street, she went up the steps to the front door, took a key from her bag, unlocked the door and went in.

“So this is the mystery,” I said to myself, and I hurried to the front of the house. It seemed to be a place where people can rent rooms.

‘She had dropped her handkerchief when she took the key out of her bag. It was lying on the doorstep, and I picked it up and put it in my pocket.

‘At six o’clock, I went to see her as we had arranged. She was lying on a sofa in a silver-coloured dress and looked very lovely.

“I’m so glad to see you,” she said “I haven’t been out all day” I stared at her, very surprised. I pulled the handkerchief out of my pocket, and gave it to her. “You dropped this in Cumnor Street this afternoon, Lady Alroy,” I said very calmly

‘She looked at me in terror, but she didn’t take the handkerchief.

“What were you doing there?” I asked.

“What right have you to question me?” she answered. “The right of a man who loves you,” I said. “I came here to ask you to be my wife.”

‘She hid her face in her hands, but I could see the tears pouring from her eyes.

“You must tell me,” I continued.

‘She stood up and, through her tears, she looked straight into my eyes. “Lord Murchison,” she said. “There is nothing to tell you.”

“You went to meet somebody!” I cried. “This is your mystery.”

‘Her face went terribly white, and she said, “I did not go to meet anybody.”





*'I pulled the handkerchief out of my pocket, and gave it to her.'*

”That’s not true,” I said.

”It *is* true,” she replied.

‘I was mad — completely out of control I don’t know what I said, but I said terrible things to her. Finally I rushed out of the house. She wrote me a letter the next day, but I sent it back unopened, and left for Norway with my friend, Alan Colville.

‘After a month in Norway, I returned to London. When I returned I saw in the *Morning Post* newspaper a report about the death of Lady Alroy. She had caught a very bad cold at the theatre one evening, and had died a few days later.

‘I shut myself in my rooms and saw nobody for days. I had loved her so much, so madly. God! I had loved that woman!’

‘You went to the street — to the house in it?’ I said.

‘Yes,’ he answered. ‘One day I went to Cumnor Street. I had to go. Doubts were destroying my mind. I knocked on the door, and a woman of good appearance opened it. I asked her if she had any rooms to rent.’

”Well, sir,” she replied politely, “the sitting room is really taken, but I haven’t seen the lady for three months. And the rent hasn’t been paid, so I think I can let you have it.”

”Is this the lady?” I asked, and I showed her the photograph.

”Oh, yes! That’s her!” she said. “When is she coming back, sir?”

”The lady is dead,” I replied.

”Oh dear!” said the woman. “I’m very sorry to hear it. She paid me three pounds a week and she just came and sat in my sitting room sometimes.”

”Did she meet someone here?” I said.

”No, sir,” said the woman. “Never. She always came alone, and she saw nobody.”

”What did she do here?” I cried.

”She sat in the room, sir, reading books,” answered the woman. “Sometimes she had tea, but always alone.”

‘I didn’t know what to say, so I gave the woman five pounds and walked home. What do you think it meant? Do you think the woman’s story was true?’

‘Yes, I do,’ I said.

‘Then why did Lady Alroy go there?’

‘Gerald,’ I answered, ‘Lady Alroy was simply a woman who had to have a mystery. She took the room for the pleasure of going there secretly. She imagined that she was a mysterious character in a story. She had a great love of secrets and mysteries, but she herself was just a sphinx without a secret.’

‘Do you really think so?’ he said.

‘I’m sure of it,’ I said.

He took the leather case out of his pocket, opened it, and looked at the photograph.

‘I’ll never be sure,’ he said at last.



## ACTIVITIES

### The Canterville Ghost

#### *Before you read*

- 1 Are there great ghost stories in the literature of your country? Tell your favourite story.
- 2 Find these words in your dictionary. They are all in the story.

<i>ambassador</i>	<i>armour</i>	<i>burial</i>	<i>candle</i>
<i>carriage</i>	<i>chain</i>	<i>duchess</i>	<i>duke</i>
<i>haunt</i>	<i>passage</i>	<i>pray</i>	<i>rise</i>
<i>rub</i>	<i>rusty</i>	<i>skeleton</i>	<i>stain</i>
<i>sword</i>	<i>twin</i>		

- a Which words are useful for the ghost story that you told in Activity 1, above?
- b Which are words for people?
- c In the past, what did people:
  - travel in?
  - wear to war?
  - fight with?
  - use to light a room?
- d Complete these sentences with words from the list.
  - She ..... to God for help.
  - He ..... the place on his leg that was hurting.
  - The sun ..... and the day began.
  - We believe that a ghost ..... this house.

#### *After you read*

- 3 Answer these questions:
  - a Why are the twins often punished?
  - b Whose blood first made the bloodstain on the library floor?
  - c Why does Mr Otis give the ghost Smith's Rising Sun Oil?
  - d When the twins make their 'ghost', what do they use?
  - e Why does the ghost decide to stop putting the stain on the library floor?
  - f Why does the ghost decide not to frighten the Duke of Cheshire?
  - g Why did Sir Simon de Canterville die of hunger?
  - h How does Virginia help the ghost to have peace at last?
- 4 Work with another student and act out this conversation.

Each of you is one of the twins. You have decided to frighten the Canterville Ghost by making your own ghost. Agree what you will use, and make your plans.
- 5 Who says these words? Who or what are they talking about?
  - a 'It's been famous for three centuries - since 1584.'
  - b 'Pinkerton's Wonder Stain Cleaner will clean it in a second.'
  - c '..... she was a bad housekeeper. She knew nothing about cooking.'
  - d 'There the grass grows long and deep, and there are the white stars of wild flowers.'

**e** 'God has forgiven him.'

**f** 'I must ask you to take them to London with you. Virginia asks for only one thing - the box in which they were kept.'

## Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

### Before you read

- 6** What is Lord Arthur's crime? If you do not already know, read the Introduction to the book.
- 7** Answer the questions. Find the words in *italics* in your dictionary
- a What is the purpose of an alarm clock?
  - b What can you find inside a capsule?
  - c What kind of life does a dean live?
  - d What explodes?
  - e When might you need a lawyer?
  - f If you do not have liberty, where are you? Where in the world can you see a famous figure of liberty?
  - g How can you be given a scar?
  - h Why is a will important to your family and friends?
- 8** Discuss these questions.
- a *Aconitine* is a kind of poison. What legal and illegal uses of poisons do you know?
  - b A *chiromantist* practises *chiromancy*. This is the art of telling people's futures from their hands? What do you believe that people's hands can show?

### After you read

- 9** Choose the best question word for these questions, and then answer them.

*What*

*Who*

*Where*

*How*

- a ..... do a number of people seem to be afraid of at Lady Windermere's party?
  - b ..... does Lord Arthur hope to kill Lady Clementina?
  - c ..... does Lord Arthur meet his brother, Lord Surbiton?
  - d ..... does Lord Arthur use to try kill the Dean of Chichester?
- 10** Imagine that you are Sybil Merton. Tell the story, as you experienced it.
- 11** Should Lord Arthur lead a happy life with his wife and children? Discuss other possible endings to the story.

## The Sphinx Without a Secret

*Before you read*

**12** Find the words in *italics* in your dictionary.

- a** What do you know about a *sphinx*? What is it? What does it look like? Where can you find one?
- b** List the most important things for a good relationship with a husband/wife or close friend. How high on the list would you put *trust*?

*After you read*

**13** How are these important to the story?

- a** a yellow carriage
- b** Whitaker's Library
- c** a handkerchief
- d** a visit to the theatre
- e** a leather case

**14** Why do you think a woman would behave like Lady Alroy? Would the behaviour stop when she got married?

### Writing

**15** You are Virginia Otis and you have lived at Canterville Chase for two weeks. Write a letter to a school friend. Tell her about the house, the bloodstain in the library and your missing paints. Tell her what you think is happening.

**16** Write the ghost story that you told in Activity 1. Use new words from these stories, if you can.

**17** Lord Arthur Savile is not sorry that Mr Podgers dies after he throws him into the River Thames. Why not? Can you understand his feelings?

**18** You are Lord Arthur and you have to murder someone. What method will you use? Give reasons for your answer.

**19** Tell the story of 'The Sphinx Without a Secret'. Did you enjoy it? Why (not)?

**20** Oscar Wilde is not often serious in these stories. Discuss examples of his humour. Do you find it funny? Why (not)?



The famous **Canterville Ghost** haunts **Canterville Chase**, a large old house. But the ghost becomes unhappy when the new owners play terrible tricks on him! In the other stories, we meet **Lord Arthur Savile**, who has to murder someone before he can marry the lovely **Sybil**, and we discover the secret life of the rich and beautiful **Lady Alroy**.

Penguin Readers are simplified texts designed in association with Longman, the world famous educational publisher, to provide a step-by-step approach to the joys of reading for pleasure. Each book has an introduction and extensive activity material. They are published at seven levels from Easystarts (200 words) to Advanced (3000 words).

Series Editors: Andy Hopkins and Jocelyn Potter

NEW EDITION



- 6 Advanced (3000 words)
- 5 Upper Intermediate (2300 words)
- 4 Intermediate (1700 words)
- 3 Pre-Intermediate (1200 words)
- 2 Elementary (600 words)
- 1 Beginner (300 words)
- Easystarts (200 words)



- Contemporary
- Classics
- Originals



- British English
- American English



Book/cassette pack also published

[www.penguinreaders.com](http://www.penguinreaders.com)

Front cover shows Ian Richardson as The Canterville Ghost  
Photographed by Tony Russell/Carlton  
A Tetra production for Carlton © Carlton Television



Published and distributed by  
Pearson Education Limited

ISBN 0-582-42691-X



9



## The Canterville Ghost and other stories

INTERMEDIATE

4

### Answers to Book activities

- 1 Open answers
- 2 a Open answers  
b ambassador, duchess, duke, twin, (skeleton!)  
c carriage, armour, sword, candle  
d prayed, rubbed, rose, haunts
- 3 a Because they are always playing tricks.  
b Lady Eleanore de Canterville's blood.  
c To use on his rusty chains.  
d A white curtain, a sweeping brush and a round, hollow vegetable.  
e Because the Otis family do not want it, so they clearly do not deserve it.  
f He is too frightened of the twins.  
g Because his plate and water pot had been placed just too far away, and he could not reach them.  
h She cries and prays for him.
- 4 Open answers
- 5 a Lord Canterville is talking about the ghost.  
b Washington is talking about the bloodstain.  
c The ghost (Sir Simon) is talking about his wife (Lady Eleanore).  
d The ghost is talking about the Garden of Death.  
e Virginia is talking about the ghost (Sir Simon).  
f Mr Otis talking is about the jewels that the ghost gave to his daughter.
- 6 Murder
- 7 Possible answers:  
a It wakes you up.  
b Medicine.  
c A religious life, working for the church.  
d A bomb.  
e When you want to leave your wife/husband.  
f In prison. New York.  
g If someone cuts you deeply.  
h It tells them what will happen to your property after you die.
- 8 Open answers
- 9 a *Who...* Mr Podgers  
b *How...* By poisoning her.  
or *Why...* Because he has to commit a murder.  
c *Where...* In Venice.  
d *What...* A clock-bomb.
- 10–12 Open answers
- 13 a Lord Murchison first sees Lady Alroy when she drives past in a yellow carriage.  
b He has to write to her at the library's address, not at her own house.  
c Lady Alroy drops her handkerchief outside the little house in a poor street. Lord Murchison picks it up. When he shows it to her, she knows that he really saw her.  
d Lady Alroy dies after a visit to the theatre.  
e Lord Murchison keeps a photograph of Lady Alroy in a leather case.
- 14–20 Open answers

### Answers to Factsheet activities

#### ■ Communicative activities

##### Activities before reading the book

Open answers

##### Activities after reading a section

##### 'The Canterville Ghost'

Open answers

##### 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime'

- 1 Open answers
- 2 Possible answers  
(a) It is funny for a normal person to think that a bomb is sensible in any way.  
(b) Anyone seriously interested in politics wants to send bombs to politicians.  
(c) He doesn't want to hurt the police because they are so stupid they actually help him.  
(d) Anyone who feels strongly about religion wants to send bombs to clerics.  
(e) The idea that making and sending bombs to people is art is ridiculous.

##### 'The Sphinx Without a Secret'

Open answers

##### Activities after reading the book

Open answers

#### ■ Student's activities

##### Activities before reading the book

Open answers

##### Activities while reading the book

##### 'The Canterville Ghost'

- 1 (a) (iii) the American Ambassador to Britain  
(b) (vii) the previous owner of Canterville Chase  
(c) (vi) the name of Otis's wife before marriage  
(d) (ii) Otis's eldest son  
(e) (i) Otis's eldest daughter  
(f) (iv) the housekeeper at Canterville Chase  
(g) (viii) the woman who was murdered in Canterville Chase  
(h) (v) the man who murdered his wife in Canterville Chase
- 2 (a) terrible (ii) bloodstain  
(b) library (viii) floor  
(c) haunted (xi) houses  
(d) strange (xv) noise  
(e) small (iii) bottle  
(f) bedroom (v) door  
(g) terrible old (xiii) man  
(h) pale (xiv) moonlight  
(i) red (vi) eyes  
(j) long, grey (ix) hair  
(k) heavy, rusty (iv) chains  
(l) strange, green (xii) light  
(m) two little (vii) figures  
(n) excellent and famous (x) haunting  
(o) terrible modern (i) Americans
- 3 Open answers
- 4 Possible answers  
(a) the bloodstain  
(b) he fell over and hurt his knees  
(c) peas  
(d) a gun

- (e) a bottle of medicine
- 5 (a) bloodstain  
(b) appearances  
(c) duty  
(d) noises  
(e) no-one  
(f) boots  
(g) interruption  
(h) string  
(i) butter  
(j) appearance  
(k) door  
(l) bucket
- 6 (a) (iii) It's silly to ask me to behave myself.  
(b) (i) Because I have to make noises with my chains and cry through keyholes, and walk about at night.  
(c) (viii) That's no reason for being alive.  
(d) (xi) Well, yes, that's true but it was a family matter and nobody else's business.  
(e) (v) Oh, it's easy for people to blame me when they don't understand.  
(f) (iv) No, thank you. I never eat anything now.  
(g) (vii) Stop! You're the one who's rude and nasty.  
(h) (x) Well, really. What could I do? It's very difficult to get real blood these days.  
(i) (xiv) You don't know anything about Americans or America.  
(j) (xii) Why? Because it doesn't have terrible old houses?  
(k) (ix) That's silly. You just go to bed and blow out the candle.  
(l) (ii) Far away beyond the woods there's a little garden by an old empty church.  
(m) (xiii) Yes, Death. Death must be so beautiful.  
(n) (vi) Oh, often. I know them quite well.
- 7 Open answers
- 8 The correct order is:  
(i) Virginia said she would help the ghost.  
(g) The ghost took Virginia through a secret door at the end of the room.  
(c) At tea time the family looked everywhere for Virginia.  
(b) At midnight, there was a loud noise and a terrible cry.  
(a) A secret door opened and Virginia stepped out, carrying a box of jewels.  
(j) Virginia told them she had been with the ghost.  
(k) Virginia took the family through the secret door and down a narrow passage.  
(f) She took the family into a low room with a large iron ring in the wall and a skeleton chained to it.  
(d) Four days later, they put Sir Simon de Canterville into the ground.  
(e) Mr Otis tried to give the jewels to Lord Canterville but he said they were for Virginia.  
(h) Virginia did not tell anyone what happened when she was locked up with the ghost.



# Penguin Readers Answer Key

## The Canterville Ghost and other stories

### 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime'

1

Lady Windermere	forty years old and childless can't live without her chiromantist
Mr Podgers	goes to see Lady Windermere twice a week tells fortunes and misfortunes small and fat without much hair on his head looks like a family doctor wears glasses
Lord Arthur Saville	tall, handsome and young wanted to have his hand read is going to marry one of the most beautiful girls in London one of Lady Windermere's special favourites will go on a long journey soon and lose one of his relatives gave Mr Podgers £100
The Duchess	will live to a great age and be very happy married to Paisley
Sir Thomas	cheerful look with a thick strong hand with a very long third finger adventurous always on time for appointments had a serious illness between the ages of sixteen and eighteen has been married twice

- 2 (a) Lord Arthur's face  
(b) his eyes  
(c) the night  
(d) the wind  
(e) his hands  
(f) his lips  
(g) the streets – in his mind  
(h) the word MURDER  
(i) the thought that he might be wanted for murder one day
- 3 Possible answers  
(a) Not sailing – they were in Venice.  
(b) He looked but he didn't see one.  
(c) Not exactly – her letters made him sad but perhaps they were not sad.  
(d) During the night after dinner with the Duchess.  
(e) No – he blamed him for her death because of what he had said not because of what he had done.  
(f) She asked if she could eat it but she didn't.

- (g) No – he was horrified because it meant he had not yet committed a murder as Mr Podgers had said.

4 Open answers

5 Open answers

### 'The Sphinx Without a Secret'

- 1 (a) good (v) friends  
(b) honest, young (xi) man  
(c) definite (vii) opinions  
(d) little leather (xiv) case  
(e) tall and beautiful (i) woman  
(f) long (viii) hair  
(g) large secretive (iii) eyes  
(h) expensive (vi) clothes  
(i) honest (x) face  
(j) faint (ix) smile  
(k) Egyptian (ii) Sphinx  
(l) mysterious (ix) smile  
(m) small yellow (xii) carriage  
(n) beautiful (iv) stranger

2 Possible answers

She did want Lord Murchison to talk about seeing her in Bond Street.

She wasn't in when he went to visit although she had fixed the time.

She told Lord Murchison not to write letters to her home.

She went to a house in a poor little street, Cumnor Street, then said she hadn't been out all day.

- 3 (a) Because he thought Lady Alroy had lied to him.  
(b) The death of Lady Alroy.  
(c) He had to know her secret.  
(d) Nobody – she just sat and read.  
(e) The fact that she didn't have a secret.

4 Possible answer

Lady Alroy wanted to have a secret; it worked and made Lord Murchison very interested in her but because Lord Murchison thought she was keeping something from him and this drove her away to her death.

### Activities after reading the book

Open answers

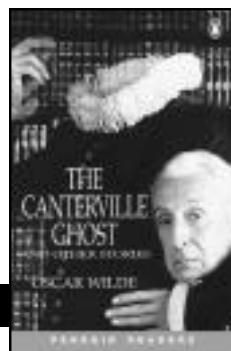




## Teacher's notes

## The Canterville Ghost and other stories

by Oscar Wilde



## SUMMARY

**T**he *Canterville Ghost* in real life committed a terrible crime – he killed his wife because she was plain and a bad housekeeper. He was punished for it by his wife's brothers, who locked him up in a room to starve to death. And yet, the story of the *Canterville Ghost* is largely a comedy.

The ghost has successfully haunted Canterville Chase for hundreds of years, but the Otis family from America prove too much for him, with their practical solutions to all ghostly manifestations, and the terrible twins who torment him to creeping around the house as quietly as possible, instead of wailing and rattling his chains.

Finally the ghost confesses his problems to the girl of the family, Virginia, and she helps him to find eternal rest.

*Lord Arthur Saville's Crime* is also murder – a murder yet to be committed. Lord Arthur has everything – he is rich and handsome and he is about to marry a beautiful girl. But then a chance palm-reading by a chiromantist, Mr Podgers, changes his life. The man tells Lord Arthur that he sees murder in the young man's hand ... so, quite naturally as the story tells it, Lord Arthur, after a period of terror, decides to commit the murder immediately and get it out of the way so that he can get on with the rest of his life.

He tries to poison his second cousin, Lady Clementina, – but she dies of natural causes without taking it. He tries to blow up his uncle, the Dean of Chichester, but the bomb makes a series of small explosions which amuse the children of the house. Finally, he meets the chiromantist by chance near the river and pushes him into the water.

The murder is done and he is free to marry, and live happily ever after.

The story of *The Sphinx Without a Secret* is told in the title. Lady Alroy is enigmatic in everything she does – a lady with the mysterious allure of a sphinx. She captures the heart of Lord Murchison with this mystery, to the point where he follows her to find out her secret. When he sees her going into a small house in a poor part of town, he jumps to the reasonable conclusion that she has a secret lover. He accuses her of this and says other terrible things to her. She denies the accusation and leaves England for Norway, where she succumbs shortly afterwards to a very bad cold. And the truth is? There was no secret lover, no mystery about Lady Alroy at all. She perfected the enigmas in order to appear more interesting, and the irony is that this succeeded in both winning love and driving it away.

## ABOUT OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde, or Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde to give him his full name, was born on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1854. He was an Irish poet and dramatist, best known for the one-liners such as 'I can resist anything except temptation' and 'There is only one thing worse than not getting what you want, and that is, getting what you want.' His plays are full of this kind of wit, but they also have good plots.

Wilde wrote many plays including, according to many critics, the best comedy play of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the farce *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Wilde also wrote fairy stories, short stories and one novel.

Wilde was born in Dublin, but went to Oxford University, where he proved to be brilliant academically and gained a reputation for wit and flamboyance.

He went to America to lecture in 1882. When asked by the customs officer if he had anything to declare, he said 'Nothing but my genius'.

He visited Paris in 1883 and returned to the States for the opening of his first play. He got married in 1884 and had two sons, who were, possibly, the inspiration for his first fairy tales.

Wilde was not afraid to shock society, which eventually had its revenge. He was imprisoned in 1895 for indecent behaviour, the same year that his best play was produced. While in prison, he was declared bankrupt and he only lived a short time after his release, dying on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1900.

## BACKGROUND AND THEMES

*The Canterville Ghost* is, for large parts, a comedy bordering on farce, including trip wires, butter on the top of the stairs and buckets of water balanced on half-open doors. It is also a study in the differences between the fey English, with their ghosts and their history, and the practical Americans, with their commercial remedies to all problems, even supernatural. But the story has a dark centre. The crime and retribution which led to the hauntings is ghastly, and this is really not a comedy at all, but a tale of redemption through the power of love. The innocent girl of the family, appropriately called Virginia, prays for the ghost and endures terrifying if unnamed, experiences to release the ghost from his purgatory.

*Lord Arthur Saville's Crime* is subtitled 'A Study in Duty' and this makes the point of the story clear from the start. What sets this apart from other stories with this theme – that a man must do his duty whatever the personal torments involved – is that the 'duty' which must be performed in this case is a murder. We see the murder only from the point of view of the would-be murderer. It is a chore which Lord Arthur must commit so that he can get on with the rest of his life. It is not the destruction of a life. In the end he manages to commit a murder and the reader is treated to the happy event of Lord Arthur's marriage and the happy-ever-after ending which is typical of stories in which a man has done his duty. But surely Wilde is being ironic? He is saying the opposite of the overt message in the story. He is saying 'One must *not* do one's duty, whatever the cost to others', isn't he?

*The Sphinx Without a Secret* is a deeply ironic story, too. Here, Wilde is making fun of the kind of person, usually a woman in Wilde's view it seems, who always appears to be more mysterious, more 'interesting' than they really are. Perhaps we all do this to some extent. But Wilde pushes the scenario to the extreme, and presents a woman who is so obsessed with being mysterious, that she drives away a man who loves her. But does Lord Murchison love the mysterious lady for herself, or for her mystery? Wilde seems to be accusing the male of the species of encouraging the behaviour and thus being complicit in the whole absurd business.

E

1

2

3

4

5

6

INTERMEDIATE

THE CANTERVILLE GHOST AND OTHER STORIES



## Teacher's notes

### Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/groupwork activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

#### ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Write on the board the captions from the pictures in the book, in jumbled order. Put students into small groups with a leader of each group. The leader shows the others in the group each picture, being careful to cover the caption, and asks them to choose a suitable caption from the board. The leader can give clues to the right caption, pointing out things in the picture for example.

#### ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

##### 'The Canterville Ghost'

- Put students into threes to role play a scene between The Canterville Ghost and the twins 'ghost'. Ask them to imagine that the Canterville Ghost talks to the other 'ghost' telling him/her how he feels about the American family and why. The twins answer as the 'ghost', saying how wonderful the family are and why.
- Put students into groups. Ask them to remember the ghost's plans for each of these people on the night of Friday 11th August. (The information is on pages 10 – 13).
  - Washington
  - The Ambassador and his wife
  - The twins
 Then ask them to say what actually happened.

##### 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime'

- Put students into pairs. Ask them to explain how these things fit into the story on pages 34 – 38.
 

a photograph	marriage
duty	a body
a list	a cheque
a basket of spring	flowers
aconitine	a chemist
a cure	stomach ache
marriage	a letter
- Put students into groups. Ask them to explain why each of these sentences (from pages 40 – 45) is funny, in a black sort of way?
  - Next he would have to try a bomb. That seemed sensible.
  - So you're taking a serious interest in politics?
  - If it's for the police, I'm afraid I can't do anything for you.
  - I didn't know you felt so strongly about religion.
  - I live only for my art.

##### 'The Sphinx Without a Secret'

Put students into pairs to role play a conversation between

Lady Alroy and Lord Murchison. Lady Alroy explains to Lord Murchison about the house in Cumnor Street, why she goes there, what she does there. Lord Murchison understands or gets angry and leaves.

#### ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Wilde is famous for his short, funny or clever sayings. Here are some from the stories in this book. Put students into groups to discuss their reactions to each one.

'A wife should have no secrets from her husband.'

'A future wife ought not to know everything about the man she's going to marry.'

'Nothing interesting is ever quite right.'

'Lord Arthur was not an especially clever person, so he had no enemies.'

'It is our job to love women, not to understand them.'

## Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

##### 'The Canterville Ghost'

**ambassador** (n) an important official that a government sends to another country

**armour** (n) metal or leather clothing worn in past times by men in battle

**burial** (n) the act or ceremony of putting a dead body into a grave

**candle** (n) a stick of wax that you burn to produce light

**carriage** (n) a vehicle with wheels that is pulled by a horse

**chain** (n) a series of metal rings connected together in a line

**duchess** (n) a woman with the highest social rank below a princess, or the wife of a duke

**duke** (n) a man with the highest social rank below a prince

**haunt** (v) if the spirit of a dead person haunts a place, it appears there often

**passage** (n) a narrow area with walls on each side that connects one room or place to another

**pray** (v) to speak to God in order to ask for help or give thanks

**rise** (v) if the sun or moon rises, it appears in the sky

**rub** (v) to move your hand, a cloth, etc. over a surface while pressing against it

**rusty** (adj) covered with the reddish-brown substance that forms on iron, steel, etc. when it gets wet

**skeleton** (n) the structure consisting of all the bones in a human or animal body

**stain** (n) a mark that is difficult to remove

**sword** (n) a weapon with a long sharp blade and a handle

**twin** (n) one of two children who are born at the same time to the same mother

##### 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime'

**alarm** (n) something such as a bell, loud noise or light that warns people of danger

**capsule** (n) a small rounded container

**dean** (n) a priest with a high rank in the Anglican church

**explode** (v) to burst suddenly or violently, making a loud noise and causing damage

**lawyer** (n) someone whose job is advise people about the law and speak for them in court

**liberty** (n) when people have the same political and social rights as others

**scar** (n) a permanent mark on someone's skin from a cut or wound

**will** (n) a legal document in which you say who you want to give your money and property to after you die

##### 'The Sphinx Without a Secret'

**sphinx** (n) an ancient Egyptian image of a lion with a human head

**trust** (v) to believe that someone is honest and will not lie to you or harm you



## Student's activities

### The Canterville Ghost and other stories



#### Photocopiable

Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only exercises are marked.

#### Activities before reading the book

Work in pairs. Look at the pictures in the book and find:

- |            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| a box      | a handkerchief |
| a brush    | a party        |
| a candle   | armour         |
| a carriage | chains         |
| a clock    | glasses        |
| a ghost    | stairs         |

#### Activities while reading the book

##### 'The Canterville Ghost'

- Match the people (a–h) and the descriptions (i–viii). All the information is on pages 1 to 4.
 

(a) Hiram B. Otis	(i) Otis' eldest daughter
(b) Lord Canterville	(ii) Otis' eldest son
(c) Lucretia R. Tappen	(iii) the American Ambassador to Britain
(d) Washington	(iv) the housekeeper at Canterville Chase
(e) Virginia	(v) the man who murdered his wife in Canterville Chase
(f) Mrs Umney	(vi) the name of Otis' wife before marriage
(g) Lady Eleanore de Canterville	(vii) the previous owner of Canterville Chase
(h) Sir Simon de Canterville	(viii) the woman who was murdered in Canterville Chase
- Match the adjectives and nouns to make phrases from the next part of the story (pages 5 to 7).
 

(a) terrible	(i) Americans
(b) library	(ii) bloodstain
(c) haunted	(iii) bottle
(d) strange	(iv) chains
(e) small	(v) door
(f) bedroom	(vi) eyes
(g) terrible old	(vii) figures
(h) pale	(viii) floor
(i) red	(ix) hair
(j) long, grey	(x) haunting
(k) heavy, rusty	(xi) houses
(l) strange, green	(xii) light
(m) two little	(xiii) man
(n) excellent and famous	(xiv) moonlight
(o) terrible modern	(xv) noise
- Work in pairs. Tell the story of this part. Use the phrases from Exercise 2.
- In the next part of the story (from page 7 to page 10), what ...
  - changed colour?
  - happened to the ghost in the suit of armour?

- did the twins shoot at the ghost?
  - did Mr Otis aim at the ghost?
  - did Mrs. Otis give to the ghost?
- 5 The ghost has given up. Complete these sentences about the information on pages 13 to 15. Use a word from the box in each case.

appearance	appearances	bloodstain	boots
bucket	butter	door	duty
interruption	noises	no-one	string

- He stopped putting the ... on the library floor.
  - But ghostly ... weren't under his control.
  - It was his ... to appear in the passages once a week.
  - He had to make frightening ... on the first and third Wednesday of every month.
  - But he made sure ... heard or saw him.
  - He took off his ... and walked as quietly as possible.
  - But he was not allowed to haunt without ...
  - He fell over ... in the dark.
  - He had a bad fall after stepping on some ... that the twins had put on the top of the stairs.
  - He decided to visit the twins in his famous ... as 'Rupert, the Headless Lord'.
  - When he reached the twins room, he saw that the ... was not completely closed.
  - He pushed it open wide, and a heavy ... of water fell on him.
- 6 Match these sentences (a–n) and replies (i–xiv) from the conversation between Virginia and the ghost (page 21).
- If you behave yourself, no-one will annoy you.
  - Why is it silly?
  - It's my only reason for being alive.
  - Mrs Umney told us that you killed your wife.
  - It's very wrong to kill someone.
  - Would you like a sandwich?
  - You're much nicer than the rest of your nasty, rude, dishonest family.
  - Who has ever heard of bright green blood?
  - You Americans don't understand anything.
  - I don't think I'd like America.
  - I want to go to sleep but I can't.
  - Is there a place where you can sleep?
  - You mean the Garden of Death?
  - Have you ever read the old words on the library window?
  - Because I have to make noises with my chains and cry through keyholes, and walk about at night.
  - Far away beyond the woods there's a little garden by an old empty church.
  - It's silly to ask me to behave myself.
  - No, thank you. I never eat anything now.
  - Oh, it's easy for people to blame me when they don't understand.
  - Oh, often. I know them quite well.
  - Stop! You're the one who's rude and nasty.
  - That's no reason for being alive.

INTERMEDIATE

THE CANTERVILLE GHOST AND OTHER STORIES



## Student's activities

- (ix) That's silly. You just go to bed and blow out the candle.
  - (x) Well, really. What could I do? It's very difficult to get real blood these days.
  - (xi) Well, yes, that's true but it was a family matter and nobody else's business.
  - (xii) Why? Because it doesn't have terrible old houses?
  - (xiii) Yes, Death. Death must be so beautiful.
  - (xiv) You don't know anything about Americans or America.
- 7 Work in pairs. What does the poem mean?
  - 8 Put in order these events from the end of the story.
    - (a) A secret door opened and Virginia stepped out, carrying a box of jewels.
    - (b) At midnight, there was a loud noise and a terrible cry.
    - (c) At tea time the family looked everywhere for Virginia.
    - (d) Four days later, they put Sir Simon de Canterville into the ground.
    - (e) Mr Otis tried to give the jewels to Lord Canterville but he said they were for Virginia.
    - (f) She took the family into a low room with a large iron ring in the wall and a skeleton chained to it.
    - (g) The ghost took Virginia through a secret door at the end of the room.
    - (h) Virginia did not tell anyone what happened when she was locked up with the ghost.
    - (i) Virginia said she would help the ghost.
    - (j) Virginia told them she had been with the ghost.
    - (k) Virginia took the family through the secret door and down a narrow passage.

### 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime'

- 1 Match each person from the first part of the story (pages 26 to 33) to one or more of the descriptions.  
 Lady Windermere  
 Lord Arthur Saville  
 Mr Podgers  
 Sir Thomas  
 The Duchess
  - (a) adventurous
  - (b) always on time for appointments
  - (c) can't live without her chiromantist
  - (d) cheerful look with a thick strong hand with a very long third finger
  - (e) forty years old and childless
  - (f) gave Mr Podgers £100
  - (g) goes to see Lady Windermere twice a week
  - (h) had a serious illness between the ages of sixteen and eighteen
  - (i) has been married twice
  - (j) is going to marry one of the most beautiful girls in London
  - (k) looks like a family doctor
  - (l) married to Paisley
  - (m) one of Lady Windermere's special favourites
  - (n) small and fat without much hair on his head
  - (o) tall, handsome and young
  - (p) tells fortunes and misfortunes
  - (q) wanted to have his hand read
  - (r) wears glasses
  - (s) will go on a long journey soon and lose one of his relatives
  - (t) will live to a great age and be very happy
- 2 What, on pages 33 and 34 was or were ... ?
  - (a) white with terror

- (b) wild with unhappiness
  - (c) very cold
  - (d) sharp
  - (e) hot with fever
  - (f) shaking
  - (g) full of murder
  - (h) printed in black letters
  - (i) made Saville sick
- 3 Each of these sentences about the information on pages 38 to 40 is wrong. Can you correct it?
    - (a) Lord Arthur and his brother spent two pleasant weeks together sailing.
    - (b) One day he saw a notice of Lady Clementina's death in the Times newspaper.
    - (c) Sybil sent him sad letters.
    - (d) The old lady had died during dinner with the Duchess.
    - (e) Lord Arthur thought Mr Podgers had killed Lady Clementina.
    - (f) Sybil found the sweet with the poison in and ate it.
    - (g) Lord Arthur was very pleased when he realised that Lady Clementina had died a natural death.
  - 4 Work in pairs.
 

Student A: Read pages 45 to 47.

Student B: Read pages 47 to 49.

Student A; Explain what happened when the bomb arrived at the Dean of Chichester's house.

Student B: Explain what happened to Mr Podgers.
  - 5 Work in groups. The story has a happy ending. Are you surprised or annoyed at this? Give your ideas.

### 'The Sphinx Without a Secret'

- 1 Match the adjectives and nouns to make phrases from pages 51 and 52.
 

(a) good	(i) woman
(b) honest, young	(ii) Sphinx
(c) definite	(iii) eyes
(d) little leather	(iv) stranger
(e) tall and beautiful	(v) friends
(f) long	(vi) clothes
(g) large secretive	(vii) opinions
(h) expensive	(viii) hair
(i) honest	(ix) smile
(j) faint	(x) face
(k) Egyptian	(xi) man
(l) mysterious	(xii) carriage
(m) small yellow	(xiii) smile
(n) beautiful	(xiv) case
- 2 Lady Elroy did several strange things in the story from page 54 to 56. Make a list in pairs.
- 3 Answer these questions about the last part of the story.
  - (a) Why did Lord Murchison go to Norway?
  - (b) What did he read about while he was there?
  - (c) Why did he go to the house in Cumnor Street?
  - (d) Who did Lady Alroy meet at the house?
  - (e) What was Lady Alroy's secret?
- 4 Look up the word *irony* in your dictionary then answer this question in groups. What is the great irony of this story?

## Activities after reading the book

Work in pairs. Try to give the main points of each story in 5 sentences.

